
Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development: A Review Paper

Ajape Temitope Solomon, Jacob Angel Emobweseh

Mewar International University, Nigeria
ajapetemitope@gmail.com, kaigamajacob@yahoo.com

Niyi Jacob Ogunode

Department of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria
Ogunodejacob@gmail.com

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Abstract: The study explored the Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria. The study revealed that Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development have led to research and innovation development, capacity building and staff development, technical and vocational education (TVET) collaboration, postgraduate training and scholarships and infrastructure development and institutional support in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that Nigeria and Germany should expand joint research initiatives, especially in priority areas such as renewable energy, digital technology, agriculture, public health, and climate change. Establishing more bilateral research centers and innovation hubs within Nigerian universities will enhance knowledge transfer, scientific productivity, and technological advancement. These centers can be co-managed by Nigerian and German institutions to promote sustainability and relevance to national development goals. Nigeria and Germany should increase investment in staff development and exchange programs for lecturers, researchers, and university administrators. This will promote academic excellence, modern teaching methods, and effective research management. Germany's dual vocational training model should be more systematically integrated into Nigeria's tertiary education system, especially within polytechnics and technical universities. Joint Nigeria-Germany TVET programs can bridge the gap between theory and practice, produce highly skilled graduates, and address unemployment challenges. Collaborative curriculum development and industrial attachment programs should be prioritized to ensure relevance to both local and global labor market needs. There is a need for enhanced financial and infrastructural support from both governments and development agencies to improve research facilities, laboratories, digital infrastructure, and learning environments. Germany, through agencies such as GIZ and KfW Development Bank, can provide concessional funding and technical assistance for modernizing Nigerian campuses, while Nigeria should ensure transparency and accountability in managing these resources. Nigerian and German should develop a long-term policy framework to coordinate and monitor bilateral activities in higher education. This framework should involve stakeholders such as the Federal Ministry of Education (Nigeria), DAAD, GIZ, and university representatives from both nations.

Keys words: Bilateral Collaboration, Tertiary Education.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria–Germany bilateral collaboration on tertiary education development represents an important dimension of the long-standing diplomatic and development partnership between the two nations. This collaboration focuses on strengthening Nigeria's higher education system through joint academic programs, research partnerships, institutional capacity building, and exchange initiatives. Germany, recognized globally for its advanced educational system and emphasis on research and innovation, has supported Nigeria in areas such as science and technology, vocational and technical education, curriculum development, and postgraduate training.

Through the involvement of institutions such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, 2022), the Goethe-Institut, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, 2023), Germany has facilitated scholarships, research grants, academic exchange programs, and collaborative projects that promote knowledge transfer and institutional strengthening in Nigerian universities. These initiatives aim to enhance the quality of teaching and research, foster innovation, and produce graduates equipped with the skills required to meet global and national development challenges.

Overall, Nigeria–Germany cooperation in tertiary education contributes significantly to Nigeria's human capital development, internationalization of higher education, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education and innovation.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Concept of Tertiary Education

The National Policy on Education (2013) defines tertiary education as the educational phase following Post Basic Education. It encompasses institutions like universities, Inter - University Centres (e.g., Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village), Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and specialized entities like Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology, and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education is an educational institution that is saddled with the responsibilities of teaching, research and community service implementation for manpower development and nation-building (Ogunode, Awah & Suleiman, 2024).

Tertiary education refers to specialized education in a specific field, taken on after finishing high school. Tertiary education is non-compulsory and provided in a specialist institution, usually a college, polytechnic or university. This form of education may be delivered virtually or at a distance (Top-hat, 2023). Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023) conceptualized tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and for the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education is also seen as post-basic and secondary school education that enhances advanced teaching, research and community service (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Ogwuche, 2024).

2.2 Concept Nigeria–Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development

Nigeria–Germany bilateral collaboration on tertiary education development is a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening Nigeria's higher education system through academic cooperation, research advancement, capacity building, and institutional support. The collaboration reflects both countries' commitment to promoting quality education, innovation, and sustainable development in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). Germany, through its development agencies such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, 2023), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, 2022), and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), has provided significant support to Nigeria's tertiary education sector. These agencies facilitate scholarships for Nigerian students and academics, promote joint research projects, and provide technical assistance to universities and research institutes.

Key areas of collaboration include research and innovation, where Nigerian and German universities

jointly conduct studies and share knowledge in science, engineering, agriculture, and climate change; capacity building and staff training, where Nigerian lecturers and administrators receive advanced training to improve institutional performance; and technical and vocational education where Germany's dual training system inspires reforms in Nigeria's polytechnics and technical universities. Additionally, Germany has supported infrastructure development by funding laboratories, ICT facilities, and research centers in selected Nigerian universities.

Through these initiatives, the partnership has contributed to the internationalization of Nigerian tertiary education, improved academic quality, and enhanced human capital development. It has also encouraged innovation, strengthened university governance, and fostered long-term institutional linkages between Nigerian and German higher education institutions. Nigeria–Germany bilateral collaboration in tertiary education serves as a model of educational diplomacy and international cooperation, helping Nigeria to build a globally competitive and sustainable higher education system.

3.0 Method

The Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria. This paper is a position paper that adopted a systematic literature review-based method. The method allows to collect and review the related previous literature from various online sources. With the aid of digital platform, the researcher collected secondary information to generate knowledge on this topic from 2015-2025. The position paper followed qualitative narrative design method. The researcher has visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze the Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes as on the Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion

This output of the literatures on the Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development in Nigeria presents an in-depth study and result that can infer conclusion on the topic. The study includes: online publication; conference paper, journals sorted from reputable international journals such as CEON, Elsevier, Hindawi, JSTOR, IEEE, Learn Techlib, SAGE, Nebraska and Springer (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025v).

Exclusion

Also, the literature review excludes information from edited books, preprints, monographs, information below 2015 and book chapters (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

4.0 Result and Discussion on areas of Nigeria–Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development

Nigeria and Germany have maintained a strong partnership in the field of tertiary education, focusing on strengthening institutional capacity, promoting research and innovation, and enhancing the quality of higher education. This collaboration is facilitated through various German organizations, Nigerian government agencies, and higher institutions in both countries. Five major areas of cooperation are discussed below:

Research and Innovation Development

Research and innovation are central to Nigeria–Germany educational cooperation. German institutions, particularly through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), have supported Nigerian universities and researchers with funding for scientific research, joint publications, and innovation projects. These initiatives encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and the exchange of ideas between scholars from both nations (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation 2022). The partnership has enhanced Nigeria's capacity in fields such as renewable energy,

agriculture, environmental studies, engineering, and health sciences. Moreover, programs like DAAD's "Partnerships for the Development of Higher Education Institutions in Developing Countries" (PAGEL) have provided Nigerian universities with research equipment and training in scientific methods and academic management (DAAD 2023). This collaboration between Nigeria and Germany has greatly impacted the development of tertiary education and research innovation in both nations. With a focus on fostering intellectual growth and exchange, this bilateral partnership has enabled the sharing of knowledge, resources, and innovative ideas. As a result, Ogunode, Cletus, Bitrus & Kauna (2024) noted that both countries have seen significant advancements in their academic and research sectors, leading to the development of new and groundbreaking technologies, solutions, and theories. Furthermore, Muhammed, (2019) this collaboration has also encouraged cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, creating a diverse and dynamic academic environment. Overall, the Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development has played a crucial role in promoting research and innovation development, propelling both nations towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

Capacity Building and Staff Development

Germany has played a significant role in enhancing the academic and administrative capacity of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Through programs such as DAAD's In-Country/In-Region Scholarship Programme, Nigerian lecturers and university administrators receive postgraduate training, pedagogical skill development, and exposure to international academic standards (DAAD 2022). GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) also supports higher education reforms by providing training workshops, curriculum development, and institutional management capacity programs. These capacity-building efforts improve academic leadership, research management, and university governance across Nigerian institutions (GIZ 2021). The Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development has significantly contributed to capacity building and staff development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This partnership has facilitated the exchange of knowledge, resources, and expertise between the two countries, leading to an overall improvement in the quality of education in Nigeria (GIZ 2021; Ogunode, & Offia 2024). Through this collaboration, Nigerian tertiary institutions have been able to leverage the expertise and resources of German universities and educational institutions. This has resulted in the development of new curriculum, training programs, and research projects that align with international standards and best practices. Furthermore, the partnership has led to numerous educational opportunities for Nigerian educators and staff members. Through scholarships, workshops, and conferences organized by German institutions, Nigerian educators have been able to enhance their skills and knowledge in their respective fields. This has not only benefited the individual educators, but also the institutions they belong to, as they are able to bring back new ideas and methodologies to improve their teaching and research. With the support of the Germany-Nigeria collaboration, Nigerian tertiary institutions have also been able to upgrade their facilities and infrastructure. This has created a more conducive learning environment for students and has empowered faculty members to conduct cutting-edge research (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Ogwuche 2023).

Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) Collaboration

Another key area of collaboration is the promotion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) within tertiary institutions (GIZ 2023). Germany's strong dual vocational training model has inspired reforms in Nigeria's polytechnics and technical universities. Through joint projects between the German-Nigerian Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration and Nigerian technical institutions, Germany provides technical expertise, modern equipment, and industrial linkages to enhance employability and practical skills. This collaboration ensures that Nigerian graduates acquire hands-on experience relevant to the labor market, particularly in engineering, renewable energy, and manufacturing sectors (Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria 2022). Many countries, including Nigeria and Germany, have recognized the importance of collaboration in the development of tertiary education systems. In light of this, the two countries have engaged in a bilateral collaboration focused on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria (DAAD 2023). This collaboration has not only

strengthened the overall education system in Nigeria, but also led to the establishment of Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) collaboration within the country. As a result, Nigeria has been able to benefit from Germany's expertise and experience in the field of TVET, leading to the improvement and expansion of TVET programs across the country (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation 2022). This collaboration has also allowed for the exchange of knowledge and best practices between the two countries, ultimately enhancing the quality of vocational education in Nigeria. Thanks to the Nigeria-Germany bilateral collaboration on tertiary education development, TVET collaboration in Nigeria has been able to thrive and contribute to the overall growth and development of the country's education system (Olalekan A. B. (2024).

Postgraduate Training and Scholarships

Postgraduate education forms a cornerstone of Nigeria–Germany cooperation. The DAAD provides numerous scholarships to Nigerian students for master's and doctoral studies in German universities (DAAD 2024). These scholarships not only support individual academic advancement but also contribute to Nigeria's human capital development in science, technology, engineering, and the humanities. In addition, Ogunode, Ukozor, and Agbo, (2024) and (DAAD 2023) observed that Nigerian universities have benefited from joint degree programs and research supervision partnerships with German counterparts. This exchange of knowledge and exposure to advanced research environments enhances academic quality and promotes internationalization in Nigerian higher education (Federal Republic of Germany Embassy, Abuja 2023). The Nigeria–Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development has resulted in significant advancements in postgraduate training and scholarship opportunities for students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This partnership has enabled a strong exchange of knowledge and resources between the two countries, leading to the development of specialized programs and funding opportunities for Nigerian students in various fields (Ojo, 2017; Okoro, & Ezeaku, 2023).. As a result of this collaboration, Nigerian tertiary institutions have been able to offer more postgraduate programs and attract top scholars and researchers from Germany. This has also opened up numerous scholarship opportunities for Nigerian students to pursue advanced studies in Germany, further enhancing the academic landscape in both countries. The Nigeria–Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development has greatly expanded opportunities for academic growth and development in Nigerian tertiary institutions ((DAAD 2023; Omoruyi.,Yao,Abah,&Mvuh 2017).

Infrastructure Development and Institutional Support

Germany has contributed significantly to the improvement of infrastructure in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Through bilateral aid and collaborative projects, Germany supports the establishment of laboratories, libraries, research centers, and ICT facilities. Notably, GIZ and the KfW Development Bank have funded projects aimed at improving energy efficiency and digital infrastructure in Nigerian universities (KfW Development Bank 2023). These projects not only enhance learning environments but also promote sustainable development by integrating green technologies and renewable energy systems into campus operations (GIZ 2022). The Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development as noted by Tolu-Kolawole, (2025) and DAAD (2023) has resulted in significant improvements in infrastructure and institutional support in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Through partnerships and exchange programs, German universities and institutions have provided technical assistance and resources to support the development of Nigeria's tertiary education system. This has led to the construction and renovation of facilities, such as laboratories and libraries, and the implementation of modern teaching methods and curriculum. Furthermore, University World News (2024) noted that the collaboration has also facilitated the establishment of scholarships and study abroad opportunities for Nigerian students, enhancing their educational experience and promoting cultural exchange. As a result, Nigerian tertiary institutions have been able to attract more students and improve the overall quality of education, contributing to the country's economic and social development.

4.1 Findings

The study showed that Nigeria-Germany Bilateral Collaboration on Tertiary Education Development have led to research and innovation development, capacity building and staff development, technical and vocational education (TVET) collaboration, postgraduate training and scholarships and infrastructure development and institutional support in Nigeria

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria-Germany bilateral collaboration on tertiary education has made substantial contributions to research development, capacity building, vocational training, postgraduate education, and infrastructure improvement. Through the joint efforts of DAAD, GIZ, AvH, and other agencies, the partnership continues to strengthen Nigeria's higher education system, foster innovation, and promote sustainable national development in line with global education standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the collaboration have led to research and innovation development, capacity building and staff development, technical and vocational education (TVET) collaboration, postgraduate training and scholarships and infrastructure development and institutional support in Nigeria

Based on the findings, the study recommends the followings:

1. To deepen academic collaboration, Nigeria and Germany should expand joint research initiatives, especially in priority areas such as renewable energy, digital technology, agriculture, public health, and climate change. Establishing more bilateral research centers and innovation hubs within Nigerian universities will enhance knowledge transfer, scientific productivity, and technological advancement. These centers can be co-managed by Nigerian and German institutions to promote sustainability and relevance to national development goals.
2. Both countries should increase investment in staff development and exchange programs for lecturers, researchers, and university administrators. This will promote academic excellence, modern teaching methods, and effective research management. The expansion of DAAD scholarships and GIZ training programs will help Nigerian academics gain international exposure, while German institutions can benefit from collaboration with Nigeria's growing pool of scholars and researchers.
3. Germany's dual vocational training model should be more systematically integrated into Nigeria's tertiary education system, especially within polytechnics and technical universities. Joint Nigeria-Germany TVET programs can bridge the gap between theory and practice, produce highly skilled graduates, and address unemployment challenges. Collaborative curriculum development and industrial attachment programs should be prioritized to ensure relevance to both local and global labor market needs.
4. There is a need for enhanced financial and infrastructural support from both governments and development agencies to improve research facilities, laboratories, digital infrastructure, and learning environments. Germany, through agencies such as GIZ and KfW Development Bank, can provide concessional funding and technical assistance for modernizing Nigerian campuses, while Nigeria should ensure transparency and accountability in managing these resources.
5. Both countries should develop a long-term policy framework to coordinate and monitor bilateral activities in higher education. This framework should involve stakeholders such as the Federal Ministry of Education (Nigeria), DAAD, GIZ, and university representatives from both nations. Regular review meetings, performance assessments, and policy dialogues will ensure that the partnership remains effective, mutually beneficial, and aligned with Nigeria's higher education reform agenda and Germany's international development strategy.

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