Challenges and Prospects of Financing Higher Education with Local Government Funds in Nigeria

Adeleke, Gabriel Osuolale

Department of Political Science,
School of Secondary Education (Arts and Social Sciences Programmes),
Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate,
Oyo State Nigeria.
G.S.M. 07035666692 & 08131285474
Email: gabrieladeleke680@gmail.com

²SOLARU, Oladapo Emmanuel.

Department of Public Administration, The Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Saapade, Ogun State.

omoadetu@yahoo.com & oladapo@yahoo.com DOI: 10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no6.2025.pg14.25

Abstract

At public level, both federal and state Governments are concurrently empowered by the constitution to provide higher education for Nigerian citizens. Presently, some state governments co-opt their local governments into the funding of higher institutions of their states. The study intended to know if any relationship exists between local government and higher educational sectors in national development. Both primary and secondary data were used. For the primary data, a total of 330 randomly selected respondents on 10 per local government basis from 33 local government areas of Oyo State form the samples. A sixteen-item questionnaire concerning people's opinions on implication of local governments' funding of higher education on the primary functions of local governments in Nigeria was developed to collect data with educated adult persons forming the study population. The study revealed that in the allocation of revenues from federation accounts in Nigeria and derivation of taxes, local government is the weakest, though the 1999 Nigeria constitution makes it a partner in progress with higher governmental levels in national development. It also revealed that its involvement in funding tertiary education has whittled down its capacity in carrying out its primary functions, though spending money on higher education should not be jettisoned as it is socio-economically developmental. To make local government capable of effectively performing both primary and secondary functions, there is need, inter alia, to raise revenue allocation to local governments from 20% to 25% and demonstration of civic morality by beneficiaries of local governments' funds for tertiary education is also important.

Keywords: Education, Higher Institution, Local Government Funds, National Development, Primary functions.

Introduction

The contributions of both local government and education, especially higher education to national development are gargantuan and inestimable. The local government is nursery of democracy which provides foundation for State and national democracy and development (Ojo, 2017). Education on its own part is useful in creating improvement in citizenry and upgrading the general living standard of the society as positive social change is likely to be associated with qualitative citizenry (Nyara, 2003). Societies that desire development make provisions for their quantitative and qualitative existence. The educational objectives of Nigeria, according to 1999 Constitution are in support of this, and they are:

- 1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate opportunities at all levels;
- 2. Government shall promote science and technology.
- 3. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide-
- (a) Free compulsory and universal primary education;
- (b) Free university education; and free adult education.

As an important segment of educational sector, historically, the development of higher education generally in Nigeria is traceable to Christian Missions with the development of technical institutes, and of course government's establishment of Yaba Higher College, the first higher institution in Nigeria, in 1932. This was followed by recommendation of Elliot's Commission of 1945 that led to establishment of University of Ibadan in 1948 and Sir Eric Ashby Report on manpower needs in September 1959 that subsequently paved way for the establishment of University of Nigeria in 1960, Ahmadu Bello University, Obafemi Awolowo University and University of Lagos in 1962 (Adedeji & Bamidele, 2003; Adesina, 2019). The goals of higher education as contained in the Nigeria's National Policy on Education, in the attempt to making higher education relevant to the socio-economic needs of Nigeria are:

- i. Contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
- ii. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society
- iii. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and international environments;
- iv. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society (FRN, 2014, cited in Adegoke, 2019).

Higher education, specifically, is thus important in giving new generations accumulated experience of the previous generation, teaching new generations how to apply new ideas to produce new product and encouraging people to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches (Adedeji & Bamidele, 2003).

Despite the lofty goals and importance of higher education in Nigeria, funding remains an uphill task, and this is very serious when it comes to state owned higher institutions of learning. Among the sources of funds for higher education are finances from the owners (government or private), tuition fees, gifts, grants, endowments, investment incomes, incidental incomes from enterprises, alumni, consultancies and research activities together with community participation, and lately TETFund grants (Akinsanya, 2007; Adesina, 2019). Apt therefore, is the statement that the overall advancement is a direct function of the quality of education and quality of education is dependent on sustainable funding (Fakayode, Fakile & Fabayode, 2019). The effects of these are felt at the level of inappropriate furnishing, understaffing, overcrowded and overstretched lecture

rooms, inadequate and outdated equipment. There are also problems of narrow strategic and core areas, loss of variety in research in teaching, among very many ones (Adebayo, 2013).

By law, federal universities are not allowed to charge tuition fees in spite that the schools complain of inadequate funding. Though the state universities are not prevented from collection of tuition fees, majority of state-owned universities remain grossly understaffed, while many laboratories and workshops and other facilities are inadequate and moribund. This makes higher education not to deliver on its mandates in terms of quality. This calls for the need to re-calibrate the funding scheme to guarantee making the system more nationally relevant and globally competitive (Fakayode, Fakile & Faboyode, 2019).

The inability of the government to keep pace with the pressures of cost in the face of other competing social demands has resulted in cost-sharing measures being introduced. This has brought about, in some states, deduction from local governments' allocations from Federation Accounts to fund their universities (Fakayode, Fakile & Fabayode, 2019). Typical in this category is Oyo State Government of Nigeria. Financial deductions are made on monthly basis to pay for the school fees of average of five students per year who are made to be sent by the local governments as a matter of policy by the state government right from the period of late Governor Abiola Ajimobi to Technical University, Ibadan. Local government funds were also drawn in millions by Oyo State Government to pay for the acquisition of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology in order to pay off for the assets of the former co-owner of the University, Osun State Government. Same is being done for the development of a newly opened campus of the University at Iseyin. This step does not exclude sponsorship of students to Oyo State College of Nursing, Ibadan. This is however not done for the development of some other higher institutions in the state like Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate, which is now the only teacher training college in the state.

Spending local government money to sponsor students from various local government to the higher institutions of learning will go a long way in achieving the educational objectives of Nigeria, and at the same time help in socio-economic terms in developing the grassroots communities through skills and income of the beneficiaries after successful completion of their educational training, and will generally help in achieving the educational objectives of Nigeria. At social service level, indigent but brilliant students in the grassroots communities are also being given the opportunity of higher education. The above is apart from the fact that local government funds some federal institutions such as the Police, State Security Service (SSS), Immigration, National Agency for Drug Law Enforcement and Administration (NDLEA). National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Population Commission (NPC) (Gboyega, 2003).

In Nigeria, constitutionally, the local government is accorded certain developmental responsibilities, especially at the grassroots and these responsibilities are both primary and secondary in nature (Zoaka & Dauda, 1998). The primary responsibilities according to the fourth schedule of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) include, among others, the provision of social amenities that promote the welfare of the citizens like good road, electricity, security, good schools, good dams and bridges. These are regarded as dividends of good governance (Ogunyemi, 2022). The secondary functions include:

- 1. the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education;
- 2. the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals;
- 3. the provision and maintenance of health services; and

4. such other functions as maybe conferred on a local government council by the House of Assembly of the State (FRN, 1999).

In order to make local government effective and efficient in the discharge of both primary and secondary functions assigned to it by the 1999 Constitution, it collects, on monthly basis, 20% of the federally collected revenues from Federation Accounts (Section 162 (5)), apart from financial shares from the state government (Section 162 (6)). It also has the power to collect rates and taxes of numerous kinds as its internally generated revenue. These are however insignificant in financial values compared to what federal and state governments collect as taxes in the system, rendering it financially weak. Even from the 20% federal allocation, it spends 5% on the upkeep of traditional rulers, 15% for pensions, 1% for the Ministry/Bureau of Local Government (Gboyega, 2003).

Fundamentally, local government's existence is to remove marginalisation of local people in programmes aimed at empowering Nigerians as it was once recognized that local people have been marginalised in empowerment programmes despite that grassroots people constitute a larger percentage of Nigeria (Bolaji, 2008). That is the essence of Section 7 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended): The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the government of every state shall subject to section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

According to Oladosu (1981, cited in Zoaka & Dauda, 1998), the effectiveness of local government is weighed by the development it engenders, the social services it is able to deliver, and the degree that is has acceptably satisfied the communities' happiness and wellbeing for which it was created to serve. The currency in the grassroots of Nigeria's democracy is that socioeconomic lives remain sub-standard among the majority of rural inhabitants as the provision of primary functions by the local government remains poor (Okunola, 2013). Because local governments are not administratively autonomous, most of the duties and responsibilities concurrently shared by the Federal and state government are being given to local government (See Second Schedule, Part II (4) (27-30). Some of these responsibilities are capital intensive in nature, and they drain the financial resources of local governments thereby withering their capacity to carry out their primary functions. This is possible because State government have direct control over local government financial resources due to facilitative factors that are made available by subsections 5, 6, 7 & 8 of Section 162 of 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended). This exposes the subordinate status of local government in the politics of local/central relations, and this has continued to weaken the capacity of local governments as the state governments treat local governments whimsically and cavalierly (Osaghae, 2015; Tobi, 2015 & Ojo, 2015).

This is not to say that performing secondary functions like funding state-owned higher institutions of learning is out of place in socio-economic development terms or unconstitutional. However, in spite of their large number (774 in Nigeria & 33 in Oyo State) and heavy financial allocations from Federation Accounts since 1999, their existence becomes a case of many governments but inadequate government as the grassroots' communities remain eye-saw due to under-performance of local governments in the discharge of primary functions, having been overloaded by secondary functions allotted to them by state governments. An inspection or investigation into some cities like Ibadan, Oyo and Iseyin in Oyo State of Nigeria revealed poor performance in areas of provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal as heaps of refuse litter many intra-city highways and the streets apart from abysmal state of local roads and bridges, whether intended or unintended. This paper anticipates to feel the pulse

of grassroots' populace on the attractiveness or otherwise of concentrating local government funds by the state governments on local governments' secondary functions like funding of higher education against primary functions, and importantly the way forward.

Statement of the Problem

Education is an important tool in the development of societies. States have therefore taken it upon themselves in making provision for it. Based on the cognitive theory of mobilization, rising level of education of the people is said to be helpful in raising the skills of the people to participate in the socio-economic development of the society (Adedokun, 2020). This thus reflects in the goals of higher education as contained in the Nigeria's National Policy on Education. However, in spite of the lofty goals and importance of higher education in Nigeria, funding remains an arduous task especially when it comes to state owned higher institutions of learning which of recent have been majorly funded by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) grants. The effect of this inadequate funding especially by those who are not adequately receiving TETFund grants manifest in form of understaffing, overcrowded and overstretched lecture rooms, inadequate and outdated equipment, among others. This calls for the need to re-calibrate the funding scheme to make the nation to achieve the lofty goals of education in Nigeria.

To do this, some state governments deduct from local governments' allocations from Federation Accounts to fund their universities and also sponsor students inform of scholarships to these state owned institutions. This is against social justice as. not all higher institutions are covered by this arrangement. This enterprise also undermines the motive of the local government funds from Federation Accounts as a provision for the development of the grassroots areas of Nigeria. In addition to this, these compulsory deductions from local government funds to perform a role which is not primarily local governments' make them to be found wanting in some of their primary responsibilities. A mere look around the major cities of Oyo State, for instance, attests to this as stated in the last paragraph of the introduction aspect above. This thus calls for further study to examine if continuous funding of higher education through local government funds by the state governments will change the tide of higher education towards achieving educational goal of building people's skills for societal socio-economic development on the one hand and the performance of primary responsibilities for the development of the grassroots areas by the local governments in Nigeria on the other hand, and if not what is the way forward. The above brings about the following research questions:

- (i) Are education and local government sectors any way significant factors in socioeconomic development of the society?
- (ii) Is there any relationship between local government and the development of human capital at the higher educational level?
- (iii) Is it better for local governments to concentrate their funds on primary functions (social amenities) against secondary functions (higher education) as enunciated in the fifth schedule of 1999 Constitution as amended as most beneficiaries' secondary functions (higher education) don't give back to the grassroots' communities?
- (iv) Can civic morality help make people be of support to their communities after they have been supported by their grassroots communities in their acquisition of skills through provision of higher education scholarships from local government funds?

Methodology

In the conduct of this study, survey research method was applied. The population for the study comprised of 330 samples that were drawn from thirty three (33) local government areas of Oyo State in equal proportion of ten (10) per local government area. It was done through method of purposive sampling. The instrument for the research was a self-constructed questionnaire titled: "Implication of Local Governments' Funding of Higher Education on Primary Functions of Local Governments in Oyo State of Nigeria". The instrument was a 16-item questionnaire designed along a modified 4-point Likert scale type that comprised of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2 points and Disagree (D) = 1 point. The validation of the instrument was determined both in face value and content validity by expert in statistical analysis at the Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate. The examination of the subject-matters was prudently executed and corrections of them were effected before the preparation of the final draft. Cronbach split-half was used to get the reliability of the instrument. In answering the research questions, the data generated were analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentages, mean score and pooled mean. A mean score of 2.50 and above was taken as accepted while any mean score below 2.50 was considered as not accepted. The duo Chi-square and Standard deviation were employed to test the hypotheses at 5% level of significance.

Discussion of Results

Research Question 1: Are education and local government sectors any way significant factors in socio-economic development of the society?

 Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of citizens' perception of education and local

government sectors as significant factors in socio-economic development of the society.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled	Decision
2/11		1,120,11	~2	Mean	200131011
1	Education and local government are necessary instruments of national development.	3.4	0.37	2.67	Agree
2	Higher education no doubt helps in the development of useful skills for national development.	3.5	0.36		Agree
3	Higher education is both labour and capital- intensive that it requires the support of every stake holder including local governments.	3.5.	0.36		Agree
4	Local government is a partner with the state and federal governments in providing socio-economic development in Nigeria.	3.2.9	0.32		Agree
Grand	3.33				
Mean					

From the data in table I above, the responses to items 1-4 with the mean rating of ranges 2.9 to 3.5, and standard deviation between 0.32 to 0.37 revealed that education and local government sectors are significant factors in the socio-economic development of the society. This is alluded to since the mean are all greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This indicated that respondents' opinion on the role of local government and education in socio-economic development of society is

significant. This confirms the claims of Ojo (2017) and Nyara (2003) on the significance of local government and education respectively.

Research Question 2: Is there any relationship between local government and the development of human capital at the higher educational level?

 Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of the relationship between local government

and the development of human capital at the higher educational level.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled	Decision
				Mean	
5.	Since local government is a partner in progress with other tiers of government, it is not out of place for it so sponsor citizen's higher education for them to acquire necessary skills for national development.	3.30	0.48	2.67	Agree
6.	Because local government is under the control of state government, it is easy for state government to deduct local government funds from source to support higher institutions.	3.10	0.26		Agree
7.	Local government sponsoring higher education is a secondary function of local government based on 1999 Nigerian Constitution.	2.48	0.35		Agree
8.	State control of local government presently prevents it from effectively performing its primary functions to the grassroots.	3.22	0.37		Agree
Grand	3.03				
Mean					

The data in table 2 revealed that respondents' rated items 5-8 which are the responses to the relationship between local government and development of human capital at the higher level of education as having mean rating between 2.48 to 3.30. The data explained that, apart from item 3 which has a mean of 2.48 and standard deviation of 0.35 which mean is less than the decisions mean of 2.50, other statement items have means which are greater than 2.50 which is the decision mean. This shows that respondents' opinions on the research question were related and that local governments have significant impact on human capital development at the higher levels of education. This gives credence to the decision of some state governments of Nigerian federation that spend their local government funds on higher education.

Research Question 3: Is it better for local government to concentrate its funds on primary functions in community development as enunciated in the fifth schedule of 1999 Constitution as amended against secondary functions like sponsoring citizens to higher institutions of learning?

Table 3: Analysis of Mean and Standard Deviation of whether it is better for local government to concentrate its funds on primary functions against secondary functions like sponsoring citizens to higher institutions of learning in community development as enunciated in the fifth schedule of 1999 Constitution as amended.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
9.	Despite the large number of local governments in Nigeria (774) (33 in Oyo State), socio-economic development is still low.	2.62	0.37	2.67	Agree
10.	No nation develops above the engagement of the citizens in terms of deploying their skillful resources for its use.	2.68	0.32		Agree
11.	Most citizens don't contribute to the development of their community after they might have benefitted from its financial resources.	3.05	0.39		Agree
12.	Citizens' negative view of the state does not help in mobilizing citizens' intelligence and socio-economic resources for community development, especially the grassroots.	2.52	0.36		Agree
Grand	2.72	l	I	•	1
Mean					

The analysis of the data in table 3 demonstrated the respondents' rating of items 9-12 having a mean of between 2.52 to 3.05 with the grand mean of 2.72 and standard deviation of between 0.33 and 0.39. It was observed that both the mean range and the grand mean are slightly above 2.50 which is the mean at the decision rule. The indication is that the respondents are not highly convinced that local government should totally focus on the primary aspects of community development. Although, to them, they should not derail from their primary functions given their significance in the security and welfare of the citizens, but they can also lend support through the performance of some secondary functions like sponsoring students to higher institutions of learning and even spending their funds on the physical development of higher institutions of their states. This is however not to compromise primary functions at the altar of secondary functions.

Research Question 4: Can civic morality help make people be of support to their communities after they have been supported by their grassroots communities in their acquisition of skills through provision of higher education scholarships from local government funds?

Table 4: Analysis of Mean and Standard Deviation of whether civic morality can help make people be of support to their communities after they have been supported by their communities in their acquisition of skills through provision of higher education scholarships from local government funds.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
13.	There is need to promote citizens' positive view of the state against negative view of the state to promote community development in Oyo State of Nigeria.	3.22	0.36	2.67	Agree
14.	Achieving item 13 above is a collective responsibility of every citizen, especially the beneficiaries' local government funds for higher education.	3.20	0.29		Agree
15	Development of cognitive sense of civic morality in the society will in long way reduce abandonment of the locality after one might have benefited from local government funds to acquire higher educational skills.	3.34	0.38		Agree
16.	Civil societies like religious organizations, educational institutions, mass media, social clubs and economic institutions can help in developing attitude of helping the community after one might have benefitted from its funds.	3.66	0.35		Agree
Grand Mean	3.35				

From table 4, it was shown that the mean of the respondents ranges from 3.20 to 3.66 with the grand mean which stood at 3.35. The standard deviation also ranges from 0.27 to 0.38. The mean is well above 2.50 which is the decision mean. This implies that the respondents are highly convinced that civic morality will be of great help in making people realize the need to support their communities after they have been supported to acquire skills through the provision of higher education scholarships, which they could not have been able to do so on their own, through local government funds. This is in support of Putman (1993) that civic morality is a vital tool of community development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study, it is surmise to say that both local government and educational sectors remain quintessential in national development project, singularly and collectively. The relevance of higher education to the development and acquisition of necessary skills for the growth and development of the society are not in doubt. Thus, the contributions of local government funds to the development of higher education and its acquisition by the citizens, especially those from the grassroots are in positive directions to national and global development. However, the tendency of state government to concentrate local government funds on secondary functions like financing higher education seems to be detrimental and counter-productive to the fundamental purpose of the existence of local governments the world over. This can be remediated by balancing the equilibrium between funding of primary and secondary functions through state government control

in order to uphold the purpose of government which is the promotion of security and welfare of the people. Doing the two effectively also calls for jacking up of revenue allocation from federation Accounts from 20% to 25%.

Local governments also need to be financially autonomous to have control on how to dispense its funds in-between primary and secondary functions without whimsmal and carvalier control from state governments. Monitoring by the supervisory ministry without imposition to avoid its involvement in frivolous and corrupt activities that drain local government funds should also be practiced. The need to grab more taxing powers from higher level governments is important for local governments given their increasing roles in the discharge of secondary functions that are capital-intensive. It is also a categorical imperative for state governments to consider funds before the establishment of higher institutions of learning. Establishing higher institutions by the state government should be strictly based on capacity and not political calculation of voting. Already established higher institutions of learning should make it an utmost priority the need to deepen their sources of revenue without encumbering the students as that may still lead to undesired state like socio-political instability that may draw back the wheel of progress of the larger society. On top of it, beneficiaries of local government scholarships should demonstrate civic morality by giving back to the communities in both physical and financial supports as recompense for what they have benefitted from the grassroots governments. This will, at the same time, encourage the local governments to do more for coming generations in funding higher education with their funds.

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