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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/13654
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/13654>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF TETFUND FUNDING ON THE SCHOLASTIC COMMITMENTS OF NIGERIAN LECTURERS

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 31 August 2021

Final Accepted: 30 September 2021

Published: October 2021

Key words:-

Tetfund, Scholastic Commitment, Lecturers, Tertiary Institutions

Abstract

Education represents a vital tool for human and national development in the modern-day world. Perhaps, the tertiary institutions are the drivers of modern knowledge across the globe, hence, the need for continuous improvement of the higher education sector for quality knowledge. The involvement of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund in lifting the faces of tertiary education in Nigeria is yielding significant progress in attaining its purposes. The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of Tetfund grants on the academic commitment of Nigerian lecturers in pedagogical and research development. Eighty-three academic lecturers randomly selected from different tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The data for the study was collected using a self-developed instrument designed to ascertain the role of Tetfund's funding on the lecturers' motivation and commitment to teaching and research. The finding of the simple regression analysis conducted revealed that Tetfund funding statistically significantly accounted for the variation in scholastic commitments of the lecturers. The study concludes that Tetfund grants are crucial in the development of quality education in Nigeria's academia.

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Introduction:-

Education remains an essential component of socio-economic development, human empowerment, and poverty reduction of any nation(Dagogo, 2020; Ediom-Ubong et al., 2018). The University system is the primary foundation for achieving the desired knowledge critical in promoting and accelerating knowledge flow for modern-day economies(Aluede et al., 2020; Matthew, 2014). Education denotes human industry. Perhaps, the more sophisticated it is, the more quality products it provides. However, higher education in Nigeria has been widely criticized due to the poor quality of its products(Anasi, 2012), age-long difficulties of limited access, low financing, decreasing quality and relevance(Cecilia et al., 2017). Scarce fiscal resources have also eroded the desired qualitative higher education and the needed national development(Akinyemi & Basse, 2012). As tertiary educational systems grow and diversify, much concern is given to the quality of programs and products(Akanwa & Eluwa, n.d.)

Higher education of good quality is essential for Nigeria to compete globally in education (Romina, 2013). The commitment of academics staff towards students' academic performance has been a topic of intense interest during the last decades(Mustapha & Sadiq, 2016). It is hard to expect a good performance from students in universities

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without having a committed lecturing staff (Munyengabe et al., 2016). Scholastic commitment is operationalized in this study as the abilities and roles expected of an academic, including teaching and research. Empirical evidence has linked academic scholar's commitment to increased student achievement (Sopiah & Sangadji, 2020; Noorainun et al., 2012).

In academics, tertiary institution lecturers are designated to job scope associated with teaching and learning, research, publication, consultancy, and community services (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020). Knowledge transfer remains the primary obligation of academics in tertiary institutions, hence, the need for academics to be equipped with validated pedagogical skills gathered through empirical researches. Thus, the pedagogical qualities and skills of the academic staff of tertiary institutions are an essential indicator of a reputable teaching system (Gambo, 2015). Indeed, the quality of universities is enhanced by building the professional competencies of lecturers (Nurmilah et al., 2020). The academic environment today demands research and teaching. Hence, the famous sayings 'publish or perish' (Uzochukwu et al., 2016) and 'teach or impeach.' According to the Times Higher Education, a vital priority of any top-ranking institution is quality research and teaching effectiveness. Thus, academic inquiries and knowledge dissemination is viewed as a complementary activity in the world of academia. However, the relationship between research and teaching performance is subject to ongoing theoretical and empirical inquiry and controversy (Elton, 2001; Grant & Wakelin, 2009; Malcolm, 2014). Research is a progression of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase knowledge about a topic or issue (Creswell, 2012). The research process entails systematic inquiries to acquire a valid and reliable answer to a particular problem and increase knowledge. Empirical research demands a lot of time and funding and could be attributed to low research publications among Nigerian lecturers in the past.

Presently, the tertiary institutions in Nigeria are undergoing great transformation due to the establishment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) (see, Fejoh, 2020; Isiaka et al., 2020; Onyeike & Eseyin, 2018; Udu & Nkwede, 2014; Uzochukwu et al., 2016). The involvement of the fund in the tertiary education system in Nigeria has led to an unprecedented reform in every aspect of the system, including the provision of basic physical infrastructures, adequate funding of the tertiary institutions, development of library materials and equipment for effective learning (Godwin, 2017; Ogechukwu & Ngozichi, 2020; Onyeneke & Ahaneku, 2020). Several tertiary institutions across Nigeria have benefitted from the TETFUND's funding and grants designed to enhance the academic skills of the lecturers, including pedagogical skills, ICT skills, and research competencies meant to improve the standard and quality of learning. Perhaps, the fund invests widely in the aspect of teacher's development through its role in academic staff training and development programs. This platform creates the opportunity for scholars to expand their knowledge for better performance (Uzochukwu et al., 2016) by prompting many lecturers to seek professional training and acquire advanced degrees from various universities across the world (Akomolafe & Belo, 2019; Eneasator et al., 2019; Udu & Nkwede, 2014).

Perhaps, these opportunities have exposed many lecturers to contemporary research models and pedagogical practices. On the other hand, TETFUND funding created the pathway for lecturers to engage in various academic discourse in local and international conferences and workshops. There is a growing increase in the scholastic commitments of academic lecturers from the higher education setting in Nigeria. Specifically, there seems to be an increased enrollment of Nigerian lecturers in foreign institutions and an upsurge in scholarly publications from Nigerian scholars. Thus, the primary purpose of the present study is to investigate TETFUND funding as a factor that contributes to the scholastic commitments of the academic lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on this, the study hypothesized that TETFUND funding would significantly account for the variation in scholastic commitments of the academic lecturers.

Method:-

A cross-sectional survey design was utilized in the study. Eighty-three ($n=83$) academic lecturers pooled from four public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria, participated in this study. The rationale for selecting only academic lecturers was due to the study's objective. However, the participants comprised males and females.

Measures:-

The effect of TETFUND funding on the scholastic commitments was measured with a questionnaire designed to assess the role of TETFUND financing on motivation and commitment to teaching and research. The scale comprised ten items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A higher score on the scale

indicates a positive effect. The instrument was validated following a pilot study, and 0.87 Cronbach's alpha was obtained.

Procedure:-

Academic staff from the four different tertiary institutions were recruited with research assistants' aid for the study. The participants were mainly pooled from the departments. A total of 121 scholars were approached between July and September 2021 and asked to participate in a survey to understand Tetfund funding's role in the commitment and motivation of lecturers to teaching and research. In all, 94 lecturers out of the 121 approached consented to take part in the study. Thus, the scales were administered to them. Ninety-four (94) copies of the scale administered were completed and collected immediately. However, only the returned and adequately filled questionnaires (i.e., 83) were subjected to statistical analysis.

Result:-

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive role of Tetfund funding on teaching and research among the lecturers. The study revealed that Tetfund funding statistically significantly predicted the participant's teaching and research at $F(1,81), 468.774, P<.000$ with adjusted R^2 of 637.

Table 1:- Table shows the simple regression analysis conducted to determine Tetfund funding's influence on teaching and research.

	B	95% CI for B		SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
		LL	UL					
Constant	1.838	1.776	1.912	.033			66.689	.000
S C	-.738	-.827	-.652	.044	-.740	.637	-16.736	.000

Note. S C= Scholastic Commitment; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $P<.000$.

Discussion:-

The primary objective of the present study was to explore the role of the Tetfund grants on the scholastic commitment of Nigerian scholars. At the same time, the scholastic commitment is viewed as the capability and motivation accorded to pedagogy and research. Thus, the study assumed that the grants from Tetfund would significantly account for the variation in scholastic commitments of the lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. A simple regression analysis was conducted on the data, and a statistically significant impact of Tetfund funding on the scholastic commitments of the lecturers was established $F(1,81), 468.774, P<.000$. The adjusted R^2 indicated that Tetfund funding contributed 63.7% of the variance in the lecturer's motivation and commitment to pedagogy and research. The result of the study corroborates previous research that established a positive association between grants and teaching and research in academia (Dickson et al., 2019; Lawson et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2013). Scholastic commitment in Nigeria's academia before introducing Tetfund was not encouraging (Uzochukwu et al., 2016). Perhaps, the study results suggest that Tetfund funding has provided commendable support to academia, first, by enhancing commitment to teaching and research outcomes, which is the primary objective in academia, secondly, by providing enabling academic environment through infrastructural development.

Limitations, strengths, and future directions

This study encountered a particular restraint that needed to be reported. For instance, the small sample size posed an impediment to the current study's generalizability. Besides, the study's data was solely self-report, thereby raising the issue of common method variance. This study contributes to the literature by revealing Tetfund funding as a vital factor in Nigeria's tertiary education, thus, broadening our knowledge of the fund's impact on the development of education in Nigeria. Moreover, to the best of our information, no study has attempted to examine Tetfund funding's role on the lecturer's motivation and commitment to teaching and research in the Nigerian context. Thus, justifying

the present investigation. Future researchers should attempt to utilize data from more comprehensive sources and establish a cause-effect relationship.

Conclusion:-

This study was focused on assessing the impact of TETFund funding on teaching and research. Indeed, the result supported our expectation that TETFund funding will significantly impact the lecturer's teaching and research. Therefore, it is concluded that TETFund funding significantly predicted the lecturer's teaching and research activities. Thus, the study recommends that tertiary institutions encourage their academic staff to access financing from TETFund. Also, the study suggests that institutions identify and remove all forms of obstacles restricting lecturers from accessing the funding.

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