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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TETFUND GRANTS: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF TETFUND FUNDING ON THE SCHOLASTIC SKILLS OF SCHOLARS

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Abstract

The establishment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund is aimed at promoting education in Nigeria. It is achieving its objectives today by providing funding that enhances teaching and learning in tertiary institutions. This study aims to examine the impact of this funding on Nigerian scholars' teaching and research abilities. Seventy-two academic staff of two Institutions of Higher Learning participated in the study. Data was collected using a self-developed instrument designed to ascertain Tetfund funding's influence on the lecturers' motivation and commitment to teaching and research. The result of the simple regression analysis conducted revealed that Tetfund funding statistically significantly predicted teaching and research. The study concludes that Tetfund financing is crucial in teaching research in Nigeria's academia. It is recommended that tertiary institutions encourage their academic staff to access the funding fully.

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Introduction: -

The Nigerian tertiary institutions have witnessed tremendous expansion since establishing the current Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) (Fejoh, 2020; Isiaka et al., 2020; Onyeike & Eseyin, 2018; Udu & Nkwede, 2014; Uzochukwu et al., 2016). The intervention of the Tetfund as an agency has brought reforms into Nigeria's education sector, such as funding and provision of the essential physical infrastructures, development of library materials and equipment for effective learning (Godwin, 2017; Ogechukwu & Ngozichi, 2020; Onyeneke & Ahaneku, 2020). The Tetfund objectives also include providing training and development for academic lecturers (Uzochukwu et al., 2016). The research grants and on-the-job training intervention provided by Tetfund have granted many academic lecturers the opportunity to study in universities in developed countries that are among the best in the world (Gambo, 2015), and exposed lecturers to academic researches. An essential indicator of a sound education system is the academic staff's quality and academic skills (Gambo, 2015).

The role of academics in tertiary institutions is to impart universal knowledge gathered through empirical researches. Empirical research demands a lot of time and funding and could be attributed to low research publications among Nigerian lecturers in the past. Presently, many tertiary institutions in Nigeria have benefitted from the Tetfund's funding and research grants tailored to improve academic skills, teaching quality and enhance the standard of education in Nigeria. Tetfund grants have motivated Nigerian academics to further their academic pursuit in various universities abroad (Akomolafe & Belo, 2019; Eneasator et al., 2019; Udu & Nkwede, 2014) to expand academic skills such as research and teaching. Also, the grants created an avenue for lecturers to participate

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and present research papers in international communities and publish them in both local and international journals. Conferences provide a more significant opportunity for scholars to collaborate and share ideas, knowledge, and research finding with people from diverse academic backgrounds and affiliations.

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 look at the top high-ranking universities suggests that research and teaching effectiveness are the fundamental priorities of these high-ranking institutions. Research 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.

The Present Study

Scholastic skill is operationalized in this study as abilities and roles expected of an academic such as teaching and research. Why some scholars are busy researching, presenting academic papers in both international and local conferences, acquiring more knowledge in foreign and home institutions at the expense of the Tetfund, others are dormant and lacking. It is sad to note that despite the role of the Tetfund in the academic environment, the most academic staff seems reluctant in accessing the fund and hence, the reason for the reported un-accessed funds. Thus, the current study aimed to examine Tetfund funding on teaching and research among lecturers. This study's primary purpose is to answer the question; Does Tetfund funding influence teaching and research among the lecturers?

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Tetfund funding will influence teaching and learning among the lecturers.

Method: -

Seventy-two ($n=72$) academic staff from two public universities in Nigeria participated in this study. Our choice of only lecturers was due to the study purpose. Participants comprised males and females. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted.

Measures: -

The influence of Tetfund funding on teaching and research was measured with a self-developed scale designed to assess the role of Tetfund financing on motivation and commitment to teaching and research. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A higher score on this scale indicates a positive influence. The instrument was validated following a pilot study, and .87 Cronbach's alpha was obtained.

Procedure

With research assistants' aid, academic staff from two different tertiary institutions were recruited for the study. The participants were mainly pooled from the departments. A total of 121 scholars were approached and asked to participate in a survey to understand better Tetfund funding's role on 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 adequately filled questionnaires (i.e., 72) were subjected to statistical analysis. Others were rejected due to improper completion.

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 $F(1,70), 379.764, P<.000$ with adjusted R^2 of 548.

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

| | 95% CI for B | | | SEB | β | R^2 | t | Sig |
|----------|--------------|-------|-------|------|---------|-------|---------|------|
| | B | LL | UL | | | | | |
| Model | | | | | | | | |
| Constant | 1.849 | 1.785 | 1.913 | .033 | | | 56.699 | .000 |
| T&R | -.739 | -.826 | -.652 | .044 | -.740 | .548 | -16.726 | .000 |

Note. T&R= Teaching and Research; 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 current study aimed to examine the impact of Tetfund funding on the scholastic skills of scholars. Scholastic skills were operationalized as teaching and research in the study. The result of simple regression analysis conducted on the data revealed a statistically significant impact of Tetfund funding on teaching and research among the lecturers $F(1,70)$, 379.764, $P<.000$. The adjusted R^2 indicated that Tetfund funding contributed 54.8% of the variance in the lecturer's motivation and commitment to teaching and research. The result is consistent with previous studies that reported the positive impact of funding on 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, which is the primary objective in academics. Secondly, providing enabling academic environment through infrastructural development.

Limitations, strengths, and future directions

This study encountered a particular limitation 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 in the development of education in Nigeria. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, 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; hence, the justification for this current study. Future researchers should endeavor to utilize data from more comprehensive sources and establish a cause-effect relationship.

Conclusion:-

This study is focused on assessing the impact of Tetfund funding on teaching and research. Indeed, our expectation that Tetfund funding will significantly impact on lecturer's teaching and research was supported by the result. Therefore, it is concluded that Tetfund funding significantly predicted the lecturer's teaching and research activities. It is recommended 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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