

AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF CAPACITY BUILDING POLICY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) interventions on public universities in North-Central Nigeria between 2011 and 2018, focusing on the extent to which TETFund capacity-building projects improved university performance and the functionality of infrastructure provided through the intervention scheme. The Nigerian university system has long faced challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor funding, declining academic standards, and limited staff development opportunities, which necessitated government intervention through TETFund. The study was anchored on Lindblom's Incremental Model and adopted a survey research design using both primary and secondary data sources. A sample of 398 respondents was selected from four public universities through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that TETFund capacity-building projects significantly enhanced the performance of public universities through staff training, research development, conference sponsorship, and improved academic productivity. The study also found that infrastructure provided by TETFund, including lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, and office facilities, was largely functional and contributed positively to teaching, learning, and research activities. However, challenges such as delays in project execution, inadequate maintenance culture, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and lack of transparency in fund administration limited the full realization of the scheme's objectives. The study concludes that TETFund interventions have contributed significantly to the revitalization and development of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. It recommends effective monitoring of projects, regular maintenance of facilities, increased transparency in fund allocation, and equitable access to capacity-building opportunities to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of TETFund interventions.

Keywords: *TETFund Interventions; Capacity Building; University Performance; Infrastructure Functionality; Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.*

Introduction

In the 1990s, the Nigerian education sector experienced a significant decline, marked by deteriorating infrastructure, low lecturers' morale, and poor teaching and learning conditions due to chronic underfunding and weak policy implementation (Saint, Hartnett, & Strassner, 2003; Okebukola, 2015). In response, the Federal Government

under Ibrahim Babangida established the Gray Longe Commission to review higher education the first major review since the Ashby Commission recommending increased funding for universities, including special taxes on companies (Longe Commission Report, 1991; Saint et al., 2003). Persistent demands by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) led to a 1992 nationwide strike, resulting in the introduction of a 2% education tax and the enactment of the Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 to rehabilitate infrastructure and enhance academic staff capacity (Okojie, 2010; TETFund, 2019). The Education Trust Fund (ETF) established to manage these proceeds was later replaced by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) through the TETFund Act 2011, which supports tertiary institutions with infrastructure, research grants, and staff training, funded via the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) (TETFund, 2019; Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

Despite these initiatives, Nigerian public universities continue to face challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching and research facilities, and manpower gaps such as low PhD staff ratios, imbalanced academic ranks, abandoned projects, and overstaffed administration (Saint et al., 2003; Okebukola, 2015; NUC, 2018; World Bank, 2020). These constraints limit the ability of Nigerian universities to compete globally, as none consistently rank among the top 200 universities worldwide (Salmi, 2009; World Bank, 2020). To address these issues, TETFund has implemented policies targeting infrastructure development, academic staff training and development, conference support, and research funding to enhance teaching quality, research output, and overall institutional performance (TETFund, 2019; Okebukola, 2015). Accordingly, this study evaluates the impact of TETFund capacity-building initiatives on selected public universities in North-Central Nigeria since 2011.

Statement of the Problem

Public universities in Nigeria face challenges such as inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, and limited capacity development for teaching and non-teaching staff. Rising student enrollment has strained classrooms, laboratories, hostels, and offices, while staff stagnation due to restricted training, promotion, and professional development hampers both personnel growth and the quality of students, as outdated knowledge reduces teaching and research effectiveness. Abandoned infrastructure projects worsen overcrowding and poor learning environments, negatively affecting teaching, research, student welfare, and safety. To address these issues, the Federal Government established TETFund to support infrastructure and staff development, prioritizing lecturers as key knowledge creators. Despite these interventions, Nigerian universities remain poorly ranked globally, highlighting the need for further improvements in faculty quality, research output, and institutional performance. This study investigates how TETFund capacity-building initiatives including funding, infrastructure development, conference sponsorship, and local and international

scholarships have influenced the performance of selected public universities in North Central Nigeria between 2011 and 2018.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of the TETFund capacity building policy on the performance of public universities in North-central Nigeria. The specific objectives include the following:

1. Determine the extent to which TETFund capacity-building projects have improved the performance of public universities in North Central Nigeria.
2. Determine the functionality of the infrastructure provided by TETFund in public universities in north-central Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

This study examined the impact of TETFund capacity-building on the performance of public universities in North Central Nigeria, focusing on both teaching and non-teaching. The study investigated key capacity-building initiatives, including staff training, infrastructure development, funding support, and conference attendance, covering the period when TETFund intensify support programmes; 2011–2018. Limiting the study to public universities allowed for focused assessment of how TETFund interventions influenced institutional performance during this period.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Incremental Model of Decision-Making, which explains how government policies are developed through gradual adjustments rather than radical changes. The model, originally proposed by Charles E. Lindblom, suggests that policymakers often begin with existing policies and make small modifications over time rather than introducing entirely new solutions (Lindblom, 1959). According to this perspective, policy formulation is a gradual process in which decision-makers compare limited alternatives and adopt modest improvements that are politically and administratively feasible (Lindblom, 1959; Lindblom, 1979). This approach, popularly described as “muddling through,” reflects the reality that policymakers rarely have complete information or unlimited resources to design entirely new policies (Etzioni, 1967).

The incremental approach reduces the risks and costs associated with major policy shifts while allowing decision-makers to rely on experience, intuition, and continuous evaluation of existing programmes (Dye, 2013). In practice, the incremental decision-making process is often described as involving three key phases: identification, development, and selection. The identification phase recognizes the existence of a policy problem requiring attention, the development phase involves generating possible solutions or alternatives, and the selection phase entails choosing the most appropriate

option among the available alternatives (Anderson, 2015). Although the model may restrict the range of policy alternatives considered, it enhances flexibility, consensus-building, and stability in public policy making because decisions are built on previously accepted policies (Lindblom, 1979; Dye, 2013).

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because educational policies in Nigeria have evolved gradually in response to persistent challenges in the higher education sector. Government interventions such as the establishment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and its capacity-building programmes represent incremental adjustments aimed at addressing issues of inadequate funding, staff development, and deteriorating infrastructure in public universities. Through continuous policy modifications including increased funding allocations, staff training initiatives, and infrastructural support the government seek to enhance the performance of public universities without causing major disruptions to the existing educational system.

TETFund Capacity Building and the Performance of Public Universities in Nigeria

Several studies have examined the role of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in enhancing the capacity and performance of public universities in Nigeria. Yagub and Olojede (2015) found that TETFund interventions, particularly in infrastructure development, have positively influenced the overall performance of universities. Their study noted that the provision of lecture halls, laboratories, and research facilities significantly improved the teaching and learning environment, thereby strengthening institutional productivity. They therefore recommended increased funding for staff training, retraining, and the retention of highly skilled academics in Nigerian universities (Yagub & Olojede, 2015). Similarly, Yusuf and Adaptor (2017) showed that TETFund-sponsored postgraduate scholarships (MSc and PhD) have contributed to improved student academic outcomes, demonstrating a clear link between staff development and the quality of graduates produced by universities. In the same vein, Ogundu and Nwokoye (2013) observed that infrastructure funded through TETFund interventions significantly transformed the learning environment in universities, enhancing academic performance and research productivity.

Despite these achievements, several studies have identified persistent challenges in the implementation of TETFund interventions. Udoji and Nkwede (2014) observed that public universities in Nigeria still experience inadequate funding relative to international standards, which limits the full realization of TETFund objectives. Likewise, Bogoro (2019) emphasized the importance of foreign training programmes in building a globally competitive academic workforce, noting that international exposure enhances research collaboration and academic excellence. However, Ogundu and Nwokoye

(2013) argued that the disbursement system of TETFund does not always consider the specific needs and priorities of individual universities. In addition, Abulaziz (2018) recommended the reduction of bureaucratic bottlenecks that often delay access to intervention funds. Supporting this view, Larry (2016) and Agha and Udu (2019) confirmed that TETFund interventions have significantly enhanced teaching, learning, and research capacity in Nigerian universities, although challenges such as misallocation and underutilization of research grants still exist.

A major focus of TETFund interventions is academic staff training and development, which includes local and overseas postgraduate sponsorships, in-service training programmes, conference participation, and modular professional courses. Studies by Eze (2014), Udu and Nwede (2014), and Isiaka (2020) emphasized that these programmes improve staff proficiency, teaching quality, research output, and the overall capacity of universities to respond to societal and developmental needs. Nevertheless, some studies have reported limitations in the impact of these interventions. For example, Agha and Udoji (2019) found that the effect of TETFund support on research quality remains limited in some regions due to institutional inability to meet the requirements for accessing funds and the misuse of available grants. Furthermore, Agha (2014) demonstrated a significant positive relationship between TETFund capacity-building initiatives and the competency of academic staff, highlighting that the provision of adequate facilities, modern teaching tools, and effective research support systems is essential for maximizing the benefits of such interventions.

TETFund Infrastructure in Public Universities and their Level of Functionality

One A major mandate of TETFund's capacity-building policy is the provision of physical infrastructure and programme upgrades in Nigerian public universities. This study examined the availability and functionality of TETFund-provided infrastructure. Empirical studies indicate that TETFund interventions positively influence learning and academic performance. For example, Salau and Babatunde (2016) found that functional infrastructural facilities at Lagos State University improved student outcomes and recommended strengthening TETFund's funding base. Obi and Eze (2018) reported that TETFund supports curriculum development, though regular evaluation of facility use is needed. Adebayo and Olaniyan (2018) observed that facilities like whiteboards, projectors, and computers at the University of Benin enhanced research and recommended expanding support to science and medical equipment. Adekunle and Abdul-Razaq (2016) noted that while funding was insufficient for growing demands, TETFund grants positively impacted institutional development, recommending timely fund release. Akanle and Oyewo (2017) highlighted that infrastructure functionality depended on electricity and maintenance, advising strict use of grants for infrastructure and stable power supply. Yusuf and Ahmad (2018) found students actively used TETFund facilities, which improved academic performance, but some resources were incomplete, prompting calls for increased funding to meet rising enrollment demands.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. By adopting this design, it enabled the study to collect information from different segments of the population on TETFund capacity-building in selected public universities in North Central Nigeria. This method guided sample selection and instrument administration, allowing wide coverage and representation of diverse respondent groups. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Instruments used to collect data are questionnaires and in-depth interviews administered to academic and non-teaching staff, TETFund officials, and students, and also relevant literatures were reviewed including: books, journals, TETFund publications, policy documents, and online materials. The population of the study is 84,765, this is drawn from four universities that is Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Benue State University Makurdi, and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University of Agriculture the study adopted a sample size of 398 respondents distributed proportionally. Stratified random sampling technique as well as purposive sampling techniques were adopted, to enable the researchers' access respondents and identified key informants for interviews. Data collected were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistical techniques; using univariate and multivariate techniques, percentages, cross-tabulations, and presented via tables and graphs. While data from interview were analyzed thematically through content analysis. The study also employed the five Likert scale to measure respondents' opinions and used weighted averages and simple percentages to assess the impact of TETFund capacity-building policies on university performance.

Respondents views on areas of TETFund intervention in their institutions

Areas of intervention	Institutions sampled				
	BSU	FULafia	NSUK	JSTUM	Total
Infrastructural Development	42	5	53	28	128 (32.5)
Funding	21	2	27	14	64 (16.2)
Staff Training	24	3	30	16	73 (18.5)
Conference attendance	27	3	35	19	84 (21.3)
Transportation	15	2	19	10	45 (11.4)
Total	128	15	164	87	394 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The table contains respondents' expression of awareness regarding the areas of intervention by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in their various

institutions. The data collected shows that out of 394 respondents, 128 (32.5%) indicated infrastructural development, 64 (16.2%) indicated funding, while 73 (18.5%), 84 (21.3%), and 45 (11.4%) indicated staff training, conference attendance, and transportation respectively. From the table, one can infer that TETFund has extensive intervention areas aimed at capacity development in public universities. A lecturer with Benue State University in the Department of Political Science, during an interview, commended the capacity-building policy of TETFund, particularly in areas such as infrastructural development, academic training of staff, transport facilities, and support for academic manuscripts. He stressed that the institution has received much of its equipment for medical and science courses through TETFund support, which has enhanced the standard of learning in the university.

During an interview at the TETFund headquarters in Abuja, the Executive Secretary indicated that the agency has created an intervention framework designed to enhance both staff capacity and the provision of necessary infrastructure required to meet the growing student enrollment in Nigerian universities. Similarly, at Nasarawa State University, the TETFund desk officer noted that the fund has played a significant role in areas such as research development, journal support, infrastructure provision including ICT facilities, transportation, and staff training. These findings are consistent with earlier scholarly studies which observe that TETFund interventions in infrastructure, staff development, and research funding have significantly contributed to improving teaching, learning, and institutional capacity in Nigerian public universities (Bogoro, 2019; Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

Adequacy of Infrastructure in public universities in North-Central Nigeria

Adequacy of infrastructure	BSU	FULafia	NSUK	JSTUM	Total
Very adequate	59	7	76	40	182 (46.2)
Adequate	47	5	60	32	144 (36.5)
Inadequate	14	2	18	10	44 (11.2)
Too inadequate	5	1	7	4	16 (4.1)
Undecided	3	0	3	2	8 (2)
Total	128	15	164	87	394 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The table shows the responses of 394 respondents on how adequate the infrastructure is for learning and effective performance in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. From the respondents' views, 182 (46.2%) indicated very adequate, 144 (36.5%) indicated adequate, while 44 (11.2%), 16 (4.1%), and 8 (2%) indicated inadequate, too inadequate, and undecided respectively. From this distribution, it can be inferred that the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has fairly provided infrastructural facilities across public universities in North-Central Nigeria, as supported by the

majority of respondents who indicated that these facilities are adequate for teaching and learning. This finding aligns with previous studies which reported that TETFund interventions have significantly improved the provision of physical infrastructure such as lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities in Nigerian universities, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009; Bogoro, 2019). To further determine the adequacy of infrastructure in the selected public universities, interviews were conducted with lecturers and students who are the primary users of the facilities provided by TETFund. Four students from Benue State University (BSU), Nasarawa State University (NSUK), Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA), and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University (JSTUM) indicated that most completed projects in their institutions bear TETFund inscriptions dated from 2011–2018 and beyond. At BSU, a student in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology explained that basic facilities such as vehicles and computers are available and were provided through TETFund support. The student further stated that there are fairly sufficient classrooms for learning within the college.

Similarly, at NSUK, a student in the Department of Political Science confirmed the availability of infrastructural facilities such as classrooms and lecture halls, with additional projects still under construction. The student expressed optimism that once completed; these facilities would further enhance the learning conditions in the institution. At FULafia, a Political Science student also noted the presence of visible TETFund-supported infrastructure such as lecture halls, classrooms, and office buildings, which were considered fairly adequate for both students and lecturers.

At JSTUM, a student in the Department of Agricultural Economics confirmed that infrastructural facilities within the university are adequate for academic use and emphasized that many of these facilities were provided through TETFund interventions. In addition, a lecturer in the Department of Mathematics Education at NSUK confirmed during an interview that TETFund projects in the university include classrooms, lecture theaters, laboratories, and ICT facilities. Likewise, a lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics at JSTUM stated that TETFund is effectively fulfilling its mandate judging from the number of projects executed in the institution. Supporting this view, another lecturer in the Department of Geography at BSU observed that the steady increase in student enrolment in the university over the years can be partly attributed to the improvement in infrastructural facilities funded by TETFund, which has enhanced the quality of education and positioned the university to produce graduates capable of meeting labour market demands.

Summary and Conclusion

The study examined the impact of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) capacity-building policy on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria between 2011 and 2018. The findings revealed that TETFund interventions

have positively influenced university performance, particularly through improvements in infrastructure such as classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities, demonstrating the Fund's role in enhancing educational facilities in the region.

The study also found that staff training and development, especially through master's and PhD programmes within and outside Nigeria, as well as conference participation, have improved staff knowledge, skills, and professional networks, which in turn contributed to better graduate quality. In addition, expanded facilities and improved learning environments led to increased student enrollment, while respondents generally expressed satisfaction with the TETFund capacity-building policy and the distribution of funds to universities. Overall, the study concludes that the improved performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria is closely linked to TETFund's interventions, which have significantly strengthened institutional capacity through sustained support for infrastructure, staff development, and improved learning standards.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby offered for the improvement and sustenance of the capacity building policy in public universities.

- i. TETFund should increase her intervention through improved founding to public universities in the north central Nigeria.
- ii. Evaluation of TETFund provided facilities be done after five years and above to determine their functionality.

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11th June, 2021

Mr. Akwe Daniel Okwe
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Nasarawa State.

Dear Sir,

Re: Application for Data

Please refer to your letter to the Registrar, Benue State University on the above subject matter dated 7th April, 2021.

2) Forwarded herewith is the information requested for as follows:

Academic Staff Training and Development (TETFund Scholarship) from 2011-2018.

Year	Foreign PhD	Foreign Masters	Local PhD	Local Masters	Total
2011-2012	3	3	13	4	23
2012-2013	6	1	7	4	18
2013-2014	7	-	5	-	12
2014-2015	5	1	-	-	6
2015-2016	-	-	-	-	-
2016-2017	1	-	1	-	2
2017-2018	9	-	20	3	32
Total	31	5	46	7	93

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7th April, 2021, skard.

The Registrar,
Federal University of Agriculture,
Makurdi.

Sr,

APPLICATION FOR DATA

I am a PhD Student in the political Science Department Federal University of Lafia, conducting a research on "Capacity building of TETFUND and the performance of public Universities in central Nigeria 2011 to 2018", for PhD thesis. I select your institution as one of my study area.

I therefore, seek for your assistance to help me with data on the followings:

1. Academic Staff Training and Development (TETFund scholarship) from 2011-2018.

Year	Foreign PhD	Foreign Masters	Local PhD	Local Masters	Total
2011-2012	1	1	1	1	4
2012-2013	-	2	2	4	8
2013-2014	1	2	3	3	9
2014-2015	-	1	3	5	9
2015-2016	2	3	-	-	5
2016-2017	8	3	2	10	23
2017-2018	5	2	5	18	30
Total	17	14	16	42	88