

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROSPECTS OF TETFUND INTERVENTION IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the prospects of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) interventions in public universities in North-Central Nigeria between 2011 and 2018. The Nigerian higher education sector has faced persistent challenges since the 1990s, including inadequate infrastructure, low staff morale, and declining academic standards, prompting government intervention through TETFund. The study examined graduate quality, barriers to accessing interventions, and the overall prospects of the scheme in improving institutional performance. Anchored on Lindblom's Incremental Model, the study adopted a survey design using both primary and secondary data. A sample of 398 respondents was drawn from four public universities through stratified and purposive sampling techniques, while data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings indicate that TETFund interventions significantly improved infrastructure, staff training, and research capacity in the selected universities. Graduate quality was rated largely average to high, suggesting a positive impact of capacity-building initiatives on academic and professional competence. However, access to TETFund opportunities was constrained by corruption, favoritism, weak implementation mechanisms, and lack of transparency. Despite these challenges, the study found strong prospects for TETFund in enhancing institutional performance through sustained funding, improved facilities, and continuous staff development. The study concludes that TETFund has contributed meaningfully to revitalizing public universities in North-Central Nigeria. However, addressing administrative bottlenecks and ensuring transparency in fund allocation are essential to maximizing its impact. The study recommends improved monitoring and evaluation, increased awareness of funding opportunities, and merit-based access to interventions.

Keywords: TETFund, capacity building, graduate quality, infrastructure, Nigeria.

Introduction

The Nigerian education sector began to decline in the 1990s, marked by deteriorating infrastructure, low lecturers' morale, and poor teaching and learning conditions (Okebukola, 2015; Saint, Hartnett, & Strassner, 2003). In response, the Federal Government under President Babangida established the Gray Longe Commission in 1990 the first major review since the Ashby Commission of 1959 which recommended increased funding through special taxes on companies. However, implementation by the Akinkugbe led committee yielded limited results. Following persistent ASUU strikes in 1992, the government introduced a 2% education tax, leading to the Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 aimed at rehabilitating infrastructure, restoring confidence in the system, and improving lecturers' capacity (Saint et al., 2003).

The Education Trust Fund (ETF) was created to manage these funds and was later replaced by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) Act of 2011, which focuses on supporting tertiary institutions through infrastructure development, research funding, and staff training, with funds administered by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) (Okebukola, 2015). Despite these interventions, Nigerian public universities continue to face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited research resources, poor student welfare, and low global ranking, partly due to shortages of PhD-qualified staff, imbalanced academic structures, abandoned projects, and excess non-academic staff (Saint et al., 2003; Okebukola, 2015). Consequently, TETFund has intensified capacity-building efforts to improve institutional performance, and this study examines the impact of these interventions on selected public universities in North Central Nigeria since 2011.

Statement of the Problem

Public universities in Nigeria continue to face challenges such as inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, limited staff training, and rising student enrolment, which overstretch facilities, constrain staff development, and weaken teaching quality, research output, and students' academic performance. In response, TETFund was established to support infrastructure, staff training, and academic development, and this study therefore examines the impact of its capacity-building interventions in North Central Nigeria (2011–2018), focusing on graduate quality, access barriers, and prospects for improving institutional performance.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives include the following:

1. Determine the quality of graduates since TETFund's capacity-building intervention in north central Nigeria from 2011 to 2018.
2. Identify the barriers to accessing TETFund interventions by staff in public universities in north central Nigeria face.
3. To demonstrate the prospects of TETFund intervention in public university in north central Nigeria.

Literature Review

Impact of Tetfund on quality of graduates in Nigerian public universities.

Several studies have examined the effects of TETFund interventions on the quality of graduates in Nigerian universities. Alabi and Fasasi (2018) investigated TETFund's influence on graduate output in southwestern Nigeria using a descriptive survey design grounded in the African political economy and resource-based models. From a population of 7,380 across five institutions, 386 valid responses were analyzed using one-way ANOVA. Findings indicated that TETFund positively impacted student performance across first, upper, lower, and third-class grades, with recommendations to retain top graduates and sponsor further studies.

Adeleke (2018) assessed TETFund's role in faculty development in six southwestern Nigerian universities, covering 11,864 academic staff. The study found a positive relationship between the provision of physical infrastructure and student academic performance, emphasizing that sustained infrastructure investment enhances instructional effectiveness and faculty productivity.

Igwe and Olibie (2015) explored the relationship between TETFund infrastructure investments and graduate quality using ex-post facto research design with secondary time-series data. Their findings confirmed that infrastructural development significantly improves graduate outcomes, recommending the provision of state-of-the-art facilities to enhance student performance.

Olowookere and Akinsolo (2017) examined graduate quality and social research outcomes at the University of Oyo, revealing average improvements in graduate performance. The study recommended that recruitment of academic staff be based on teaching experience, proper accreditation of courses, continuous monitoring, and effective student assessment practices.

Adamu and Abdulladi (2016) studied the influence of TETFund research grants on graduate quality at ABU Zaria. Using a descriptive survey of 129 academic staff, they found that research grants and staff training significantly improved graduate performance and recommended increasing the allocation of TETFund resources for academic training and scholarships across universities.

Collectively, these studies highlight that TETFund interventions—through infrastructure development, faculty training, and research support—have contributed positively to graduate quality in Nigerian public universities (Alabi & Fasasi, 2018; Adeleke, 2018; Igwe & Olibie, 2015; Olowookere & Akinsolo, 2017; Adamu & Abdulladi, 2016).

Barrier to Accessing TETFund Interventions by Staff in Public Universities in Nigeria:

Staff in Nigerian public universities face several challenges in accessing TETFund resources for academic development. Okeke and Nkamnebe (2016) examined the difficulties staff encounter when applying for TETFund research grants in five southeastern universities. Using a sample of 500 academic staff and analyzing data with ANOVA, the study found that pervasive corruption, favoritism, and stringent guidelines hinder equitable access. The authors recommended reducing these barriers to ensure all academic staff can benefit from TETFund programmes.

Similarly, Oniya and Amadi (2017) explored challenges in utilizing TETFund interventions among staff in Lagos State universities. Data from 198 respondents analyzed through chi-square and arithmetic mean revealed that staff often lacked awareness of access guidelines, faced cumbersome procedures, and experienced favoritism in grant allocation. The study suggested that all eligibility criteria be publicly disclosed, corrupt officers be sanctioned, and formal competitive examinations be introduced to ensure merit-based access.

Further studies on institutional factors affecting access to TETFund resources show that internal challenges, including low staff interest in applying for training grants and

procedural delays, result in some funds remaining unutilized and rolled over to subsequent years (Okeke & Nkannebe, 2016; Oniya & Amadi, 2017). To address these issues, university management is advised to minimize procedural barriers and create transparent, efficient systems to enhance academic staff participation in TETFund programmes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Lindblom's (1959) Incremental Model of Decision Making, which posits that government policies evolve gradually through small modifications rather than radical changes. Policymakers typically rely on existing policies, making slight adjustments a process referred to as "muddling through" to minimize risks and costs while learning from prior experiences (Lindblom, 1959). The model involves three stages: identification of a problem requiring action, development of possible solutions, and selection of the most appropriate option. Although incrementalism may limit alternatives, it promotes flexibility, stability, and stakeholder consensus. This framework is particularly relevant to Nigerian educational policies, including TETFund capacity-building initiatives, which have been implemented progressively through interventions such as infrastructure development, staff training, and research support to enhance public university performance without causing major disruptions in the higher education system (Akinyemi & Salau, 2016; Adeleke, 2018).

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design to collect data from diverse segments of the population over a defined period, allowing broad coverage and representation (Kothari, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews targeting academic and non-teaching staff benefiting from TETFund interventions, as well as representatives from four selected universities, TETFund desk officers, officials from TETFund headquarters in Abuja, and students. Secondary data included books, journals, TETFund publications, government documents, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, and online sources.

Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across population groups, while purposive sampling selected key informants for interviews. The population comprised staff and students from four public universities in North Central Nigeria,

Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Benue State University Makurdi, and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University of Agriculture Makurdi totaling 84,765 individuals. Using Taro Yamane's formula at a 0.05 significance level, a sample size of 398 respondents was determined and proportionally allocated among the institutions (Yamane, 1967).

Quantitative data were analyzed using univariate and multivariate statistical techniques and presented with tables and graphs. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically using content analysis. Respondents' opinions were measured with the Likert scale, with weighted mean and cluster scores computed. The simple percentage method was also applied to assess perceptions of TETFund capacity-building policies and their impact on university performance, enabling nuanced responses beyond simple yes/no options (Kothari, 2014).

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 adequacy of infrastructure provided by TETFund in public universities in North-Central Nigeria was assessed through a survey of 394 respondents. Results showed that 182 respondents (46.2%) considered infrastructure "very adequate," 144 (36.5%) "adequate," while 44 (11.2%), 16 (4.1%), and 8 (2%) rated it "inadequate," "too inadequate," and "undecided," respectively. These findings indicate that TETFund has fairly provided infrastructural facilities across the public universities in the region (Alabi & Fasasi, 2018; Adeleke, 2018).

Qualitative interviews with students and lecturers, the primary users of these facilities, corroborated the survey results. At Benue State University (BSU), students in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology noted the availability of computers, vehicles,

and classrooms provided by TETFund. At Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Political Science students confirmed the presence of lecture halls and classrooms, with ongoing construction expected to further improve learning conditions. Students at Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA) and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University of Agriculture Makurdi (JSTUM) also acknowledged the presence of lecture halls, classrooms, and offices, though they were described as only fairly adequate for current academic demands.

Lecturers affirmed that TETFund projects including classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, and ICT facilities have significantly enhanced teaching and learning. At BSU, a Geography lecturer indicated that improved infrastructure has contributed to increased student enrollment and enhanced the quality of education, ultimately producing graduates capable of meeting labor market demands (Igwe & Olibie, 2015; Olowookere & Akinsolo, 2017). Similarly, lecturers from NSUK and JSTUM emphasized that the widespread implementation of TETFund projects demonstrates the fund's effectiveness in supporting institutional development and academic performance. These findings align with previous studies showing that infrastructural investment in tertiary institutions positively influences student learning outcomes and institutional productivity (Salau & Babatunde, 2016; Obi & Eze, 2018; Adebayo & Olaniyan, 2018).

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that TETFund interventions have significantly contributed to improving the physical learning environment in public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Assessment of Quality of Graduates in Public Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Level of satisfaction with quality of graduates	BSU	FULafia	NSUK	JSTUM	Total
High quality	40	5	51	27	122 (31)
Average	70	8	90	48	216 (54.8)
Low quality	6	1	7	4	18 (4.6)
Poor quality	10	1	13	7	31 (7.9)
Undecided	2	0	3	2	7 (1.8)
Total	128	15	164	87	394 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The study assessed the quality of graduates from public universities in North-Central Nigeria following TETFund capacity-building interventions. Survey results from 394 respondents indicated that 122 (31%) considered graduates to be of high quality, 216

(54.8%) rated them as average, 18 (4.6%) as low quality, 31 (7.9%) as poor quality, and 7 (1.8%) were undecided. These findings suggest that TETFund interventions have had a generally positive impact on graduate quality in the region (Alabi & Fasasi, 2018; Adeleke, 2018).

Graduate quality in this study was measured by employer satisfaction regarding graduates' knowledge and technical competence in the workplace. Feedback from employers revealed that the graduates were largely satisfactory, indicating that TETFund supported capacity-building initiatives including staff training, infrastructure improvements, and research funding translate into tangible improvements in graduate competence. Supporting this, TETFund Desk Officers at JSTUM, NSUK, and BSU reported receiving 200, 184, and 300 Letters of Commendation from employers recognizing the performance of graduates. Notably, many commendations were from private sector employers such as commercial banks, highlighting the relevance of these graduates to labor market needs (Adamu & Abdulladi, 2016; Igwe & Olibie, 2015).

These results align with previous research demonstrating that TETFund interventions in staff development, research grants, and infrastructural provision contribute to the production of graduates who are better prepared for professional and technical roles (Olowookere & Akinsolo, 2017; Salau & Babatunde, 2016). Overall, the findings indicate that capacity-building efforts by TETFund positively influence both the academic and practical competencies of graduates from public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

Areas of Intervention with higher access by staff

Institutions sampled					
Areas of capacity building	BSU	FULafia	NSUK	JSTUM	Total
Academic research	31	4	40	21	95 (24.1)
Conference attendance	50	6	64	34	153 (38.8)
Academic manuscript	47	6	61	32	146 (37.1)
Total	128	15	164	87	394 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The study examined the accessibility of TETFund interventions by academic staff in selected public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Survey data from respondents revealed that 95 (24.1%) reported access to academic research funding, 153 (38.8%) to conference attendance, and 146 (37.1%) to academic manuscript publication. This

indicates that academic staff have accessed more funding for conference attendance both within and outside the country (Bogoro, 2019).

Supporting these findings, an interview with the Director of SERVICOM at TETFund headquarters revealed that lecturers are particularly keen on conference funding and publishing in rated journals. She emphasized that to improve learning outcomes and enhance the quality of education, lecturers should actively engage in academic research and participate in both local and international training programmes. This aligns with the broader literature, which highlights the critical role of staff development and international exposure in improving research capacity and educational quality in Nigerian universities (Adeleke, 2018; Salau & Babatunde, 2016).

Allocation to Four Public Universities in North Central Nigeria 2011-2018

Year	Universities
2011	1,185,000,000
2012	1,794,000,000
2013	2,584,000,000
2014	3,648,000,000
2015	1,280,000,000
2016	3,917,640,000
2017	2,076,600,000
2018	2,360,000,000
Total (₦)	18,845,240,000

Source: TETFund News Panorama, 2018

The table shows TETFund allocations to selected tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria from 2011 to 2018 based on normal intervention, library intervention, AST&D, research development, entrepreneurship centers, journal publication, publication of scholarly manuscript and conference attendance for four universities. The total allocation to these institutions during the period under review was ₦ 18,845,240,000. The allocations are to, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Federal University of Lafia, J.S Tarka University, Makurdi, and Benue State University, Makurdi. In quantitative terms, the total allocation to these universities is a significant level of investment in these universities for capacity building.

Percentage allocation per area of intervention in the four universities by TETFund

Source: TETFund News Panorama, 2019

Keys:

NI: Refers to normal intervention between 2011 and 2014, programme upgrade (provision of research facilities) in 2015 and physical infrastructure/programme

Year	NI* (%)	LI (%)	AST&D (%)	RD (%)	EC (%)	PoJ (%)	PoSM (%)	CA (%)
2011								
	44.30	6.33	20.25	2.53	18.99	1.27	1.27	5.06
2012								
	58.53	8.86	21.74	1.67	0.00	1.67	0.84	6.69
2013								
	55.11	9.29	21.67	3.10	0.00	1.55	3.10	6.19
2014								
	60.53	2.19	10.96	16.45	2.19	1.10	1.10	5.48
2015								
	31.25	15.63	31.25	4.69	3.13	3.13	3.13	7.81
2016								
	57.73	3.47	30.63	2.55	1.02	1.02	0.51	3.06
2017								
	57.79	5.78	23.11	4.82	0.96	0.96	0.80	5.78
2018								
	59.32	3.39	27.12	4.24	0.85	0.85	0.85	3.39

upgrade from 2015 – 2018.

LI: Library Intervention.

AST&D: Academic Staff Training and Development.

RD: Research Development.

EC: Entrepreneurship Centre.

POJ: Publication of Journals.

POSM: Publication of Scholarly Manuscript.

CA: conference attendance.

The table summarizes the percentage allocation per area of TETFund intervention to these four universities. From the table, normal intervention (capital projects) received priority attention followed by AST&D except in 2014 when Research and Development were awarded a higher priority than AST&D. This was closely followed by library intervention which tied in some years with conference attendance. Still from the table, one can note that the average percentage allocation to AST&D during this period was 23.3%.

Challenges against Implementation of TETFund Capacity Building Policy.

Institutions sampled					
Drawbacks to capacity Building	BSU	FULafia	NSUK	JSTUM	Total
Pervasive corruption	15	6	66	35	158(40.1)
Lack of feedback and evaluation	24	3	31	17	75 (19)
Weak Implementations	32	4	41	22	99(25.1)
Favoritism and abuse of office	17	2	21	11	51(12.9)
Inadequate involvement of Stakeholders	4	-	5	2	11(2.8)
Total	128	15	164	87	394(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The study assessed respondents' perceptions of challenges affecting the implementation of TETFund interventions in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Survey results from the respondents indicated that 158 (40.1%) identified pervasive corruption, 75 (19%) cited lack of feedback, 99 (25.1%) reported weak implementation, 51 (12.9%) noted favoritism and abuse of office, while 11 (2.8%) highlighted inadequate involvement of stakeholders. These findings suggest that corruption remains the most significant obstacle to effective implementation of TETFund interventions in the region (Okeke & Nkamnebe, 2016; Oniya & Amadi, 2017).

Scholarly studies corroborate these results, emphasizing that institutional inefficiencies, favoritism, and opaque administrative procedures hinder staff from fully benefiting from TETFund programmes. Such challenges can limit the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives, including research funding, staff training, and infrastructure provision (Oniya

& Amadi, 2017; Adamu & Abdulladi, 2016). Therefore, addressing corruption, enhancing transparency, and ensuring stakeholder involvement are critical for maximizing the impact of TETFund interventions on educational quality.

Summary and Conclusion

The study concludes that TETFund's capacity-building interventions (2011–2018) significantly improved the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria through enhanced infrastructure and staff development, leading to better teaching quality, research output, and graduate outcomes, although challenges such as corruption, favoritism, and bureaucratic bottlenecks still hinder full accessibility, underscoring the need for sustained support and more transparent implementation.

Recommendations

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

1. Universities should retain best graduates annually whose training should be sponsored by TETFund to deepen and sustain the capacity building policy.
2. Conditions for accessing funding by staff be publicized regularly and the selection process made transparent to increase access by staff to funding.
3. TETFund intervention on capacity building in public university be evaluated to ascertain the achievement made.

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ADAM STATE UNIVERSITY, KATSINA
(Office of the Registrar)

INTERNAL MEMO

FROM: Statistics Officer
TO: Registrar
DATE: 6th September, 2018

STATISTICS OF STUDENTS ENROLLMENT

Find below the information requested for statistics of enrollment both Postgraduate and Undergraduate 2011-2018.

A. UNDERGRADUATE:

2010/2011	-10400
2011/2012	-10409
2012/2013	-10202
2013/2014	-10335
2014/2015	-10613
2015/2016	-10536

B. POSTGRADUATE:

2010/2011	-3188
2011/2012	-4206
2012/2013	-4322
2013/2014	-4322
2014/2015	-4322
2015/2016	-4322

I hope you will find the information useful.

Thank you.

Yusuf A. M. Kabir (Signature)
Deputy Registrar

BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY
MAKURDI, NIGERIA
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

PROF. CHANCELLOR:
PROF. DR. J. O. EGBURE
P.M.B. 102110, Makurdi, Nigeria
TELEPHONE: 081-233-1111
FAX: 081-233-1111
E-MAIL: registrar@bsu.edu.ng

11th June, 2021

Mr. Akwe Daniel Okun
Department of Political Science
Federal University of Lafia
P.M.B. 146
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	0	1	7	4	12
2013-2014	7	-	5	-	12
2014-2015	5	1	-	-	6
2015-2016	-	-	-	-	-
2016-2017	1	-	1	-	2
2017-2018	9	-	20	3	32
Total	21	5	46	7	83