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# COLLABORATIVE FUNDING OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH UNDERTAKING FOR RAPID NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The paper examined current level of collaborative funding of research undertakings in the Nigerian university system in order to determine the level to which various stakeholders (corporate and endowed individual Nigerians) had been contributing their quote towards funding research in the university system and to find out if research funding in the system matches the expected level of collaborative research funding. Two research questions were, therefore, addressed One hundred Academics in the system from five Nigerian University who converged at a National Research Conference were used as sample and an instrument tagged Nigerian University Research Funding Perception Questionnaire was thus administered on the conferees from four of the six geo-political zones of the country. The data were analysed using graph and Chi-square. Results were that collaborative funding apart from the ones jointly funded by government and the universities or government agency (e.g. ETF) and universities, no meaningful collaborative funding of research in our universities, and that corporate bodies would fund sports and lottery/gambling because these easily bring back quick return to them and that well-endowed individuals and corporate bodies should either voluntarily collaboratively fund research in the university system or a legislation should compel to undertake collaborative funding of research in the university system for enhanced development of the country. In order to engender collaborative, the university system should evolve joint research initiating body that would be responsible for generating research policy, plans and programmes so that endowed individuals and the organized private sector could collaborate in funding the university system research undertakings for rapid national development.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Funding, Research, Higher Education, Organized Private Sector, Nigerian University System

#### INTRODUCTION

It is stating the obvious that funding higher in Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular is grossly lower than what it should be, hence, the numerous crises in the higher education sub-sector in Nigeria over the past three decades. In the light of the foregoing, Abati (2009) submitted that by not paying adequate to funding the Universities-the apex institution of higher education in Nigeria and by extension the entire sub-system, the governments in Nigeria were creating an army of unhappy citizenry. Of course such an unpleasant development will certainly culminate in hyper increased rate of crimes in the country. The need for funding the higher education sub-sector informed the statement by Idowu (2009) that government should rebrand education first of all. In a study carried out by the World Bank/NISER, according to *The National Scholar* (2001: 10-11), reports that employers also agreed that inadequate funding is a major factor informing the calibre of graduates being produced by the Nigerian university system in the face of many long drawn strikes that frequently occurs in the last few decades. By implication, therefore, inadequate funding of higher education results in poor quality of the Nigerian university system products.

According to Egbokhare (2001), between 1948 and 1973, confrontation between government and university unions was rare, however, there have been so many of them from thence, and in particular in the years, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2001 all witnessed long drawn crises that led to the closure of the system for several months in each of those

years, even twice in a year in some cases. U.I.A.A News of December 2008 on its front page reported that no Nigerian university was among the top 20 in Africa, let alone in the world. One of the major and perhaps most indicators used in the ranking system is presence on web. So how can any Nigerian public or even private university on web with inadequate funding. The crises had not abated much as there have been several strikes from 2001 to 2009 and may still continue unless government honours its commitment to adequately funding the system as 2009 agreement with university staff unions. If private universities which are entirely business ventures are begging for fund from government, then there is no way we can expect to be rated high among African and world universities, as it takes adequately sustainable funding to function effectively and efficiently to get high ranking among world universities. The table below illustrates the abysmal nature of university financing mode in Nigeria, where over 90% of its revenue comes from government which in itself is a paltry sum of money when viewed from the fact that it is less than 10% of government's annual budget as implied by Onuka (2005).

Table 1
Relative Sources of Fund Available to a
Nigerian University

Sources of fund	%
Government subvention	91
Tuition fees	Nil
Endowments	0.1%
Development levies	4.6%
Bonds	Nil
Loans	0.4
Return on investments	1.4
Debentures	0.0
Stocks and shares	0.7
Miscellaneous	0.8
External aids and grants	0.2
Research & Consultancy services	0.3
Sales of products (internal)	Nil
Use of university facilities	0.3
The corporate world	0.2
Others	Nil
Total	<b>*</b> 100.0

Source: Onuka (2007a: 7)

The picture given in this table is worrisome, in that only 0.3% comes in form income from research and consultancy services to one of the foremost

universities in the country. It implies that not much attention was paid to research in terms of funding. Corporate bodies and philanthropic individuals in Nigeria are not much worried about research funding as they would about sports and lottery that would respectively give them either publicity or much return on their investments, which research may not given in the immediate, though it would in long run and a lasting one at that (Onuka, 2005; 2007a). Whereas the Nigerian higher education system enjoys some measure of research financing from Foundations founded by Americans and others, which had outlived their initiators, yet a only a trickle of such research funding ever came from Nigerians as implied in the list given by Bamiro and Adedeji (2010) as well as Onuka (2007a). This is the trend in the Sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa (kasozi, 2009). Onuka further implied that government alone cannot be left to fund research or education all by itself, if cognizance is taken of the fact that the university has a tripartite mandate of teaching/learning, research and community services. Indeed, researches engender both quality teaching and community services; hence, it can only be ignored at the peril of sustainable national development (Onuka, 2007b), Nigeria eagerly needs.

The quantum of research undertaken by the system will surely promotes the system's ranking potential, if it is significant, and provided the results of such exercises are disseminated and utilised. Yet, no research can be properly undertaken, if there are no such funds to execute them. Onuka (2007a) found that less than 10% of the university system's annual recurrent expenditure is spent on research. This is due to the fact the resources available to the system can hardly meet its overhead and administrative expenses which are quite essential to keep the system minimally going. Kolawole (2008) and Aminu (2008) respectively believe that funding is the bane of the Nigerian university system. However, Onuka and Onabamiro (2010) are of the opinion that research, when properly carried out, well-managed and results utilized, it can become a major source of financing the system, provide a substantial amount of money is devoted to funding research in the university system.

Another problem of researching in Nigerian university researching that bothers on effectively and efficiently communicating research findings to the various publics which have utilized or applied their findings (Onuka and Onabamiro, 2010; Onuka and Durowoju, 2011). The two studies discovered

that even though substantially significant quantum quality research is being undertaken by researchers in the university system, which is the apex institution in the higher education sub-sector, quite significant amount of their findings end up in the trash bin. A tour of some research institutions in Nigeria will reveal that much of the research findings find their way to the trash bins, because the industrial and other sectors needing research findings are not collaborating to fund researching in the system. Even, some institutions that should harnessed research findings in their sectors, often than not, concentrate their efforts on their secondary mandates (Onuka and Onabamiro, 2010). for instance, the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) concentrates more curriculum and book development at the expense of promoting and harnessing researching and research findings for onward dissemination. The table below gives the graphical view of the abysmal allocation of resources to the education sector by the Federal Government known to give more attention to the sector than State Governments.

Table 2
Proportion of Federal Government Budget
Allocated to Education (1990-2006)

	A CONTRACTOR OF THE CONTRACTOR
Year	% of total budget allocated to education
1990	5.3
1991	4.1
1992	6.3
1993	7.3
1994	14.9
1995	13.0
1996	10.8
1997	11.5
1998	9.6
1999	11.1
2000	10.1
2002	12.2
2004	10.5
2006	11.0

\*The proportion indicated is the mean for 2003 and 2005 which seemingly the highest for the period covered by the table.

Source: Okoli in Onuka (2007a: 3).

From Table 2 above, it is obviously clear that if the proportion of the federal budget allocated to education including the ministry and agencies is 15% at its peak, then not more than 8% would at any time be allocated to the higher education sub-sector of the economy. The above table is an illustration of the neglect the education sector had generally suffered in terms of funding, and since teaching seems to yield immediate visible results, institutions of higher learning concentrate their efforts and energy on teaching and learning to the neglect of researching, which not only engenders improved teaching and learning process, but also enhanced the provision of quality community services, which is the third mandate of the university system. It is in recognition of this, that the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) among other East African universities, stresses the very important role research plays in the statements of their vision, mission and philosophy (CUEA Programme of Studies, 2008-2012).

The importance of research in the development of any nation and the world at large cannot be overemphasised. This is why Kothari (2004: 1), quoting the Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, defines research as 'a careful investigation or inquiry specially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge'. Furthermore, quoting Meir, Newell and Dazier, he stressed that 'All progress is born of inquiry. Doubt is often better than overconfidence, for it leads to inquiry, and inquiry leads to invention' p.5. No such tedious and painstaking inquiry can be carried out if it is not adequately financed. If research is very important as a potent instrument of national development, then it must be well-funded. Knowing full well the enormity of government responsibility and duty to its citizenry and the insufficient amount of resources available to it to effectively and efficiently discharge such enormous obligations, the organized private sector and well-endowed individual Nigerians should collaborate with the universities in terms of funding research and the dissemination of research findings process, in order to fast track Nigerian national development and thereby reduce our dependence on the so-called advanced nations. The poor level of higher education funding also hinders it from undertaking in-depth researches that could lead to invention and innovation, both of which are agents of rapid development. This is also in consonance with the view expressed by kasozi (2009) about the poor state of funding higher education in Uganda, thereby recommending collaborative funding as the way out of the problem or the challenge of underfunding.

In the light of the above, this study sought to find out the level of involvement of the Nigerian corporate world and well-endowed individual Nigerians in collaborating with universities and university-based individual researchers in funding research undertakings for rapid national development. It also investigated whether the current level collaborative research funding met the expected level of research undertakings in the university system in Nigeria for rapid national development.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following two research questions were addressed by the study:

- 1. To what level do the Nigerian corporate world and well-endowed Nigerians collaborate to fund: (a) research undertaking and (b) research finding dissemination in the Nigerian university system?
- 2. Is the there any significant difference between expected level of collaborative research funding and the actual level of collaboratively sponsored research in the Nigerian university system for rapid national development?

# **METHODOLOGY**

The procedure adopted for the study was ex-post facto research type. The sample was made up of one hundred academics/researchers five Nigerian Universities which were purposively selected from participants at a National Conference of Researchers in Higher Education Institutions Nigeria from four of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, because they were representative of the humanities and the Sciences as well as being substantially representative of the geo-political zones. An instrument tagged Nigerian University Research Funding Perception Questionnaire, which was constructed and validated using Lawshe's Content Validity Index (CVI) and administer-readminister as well as construct validity procedures which yielded CVI of 0.71; reliability co-efficient of 0.82 and construct validity, was thus administered on the conferees [subjects]. The resulting data were analysed using graph and Chi-square.

# RESULT

The first was answered by categorizing the levels of contribution to research findings as follows: very high (80% and above), high (60-79%), relatively high (40-59%), low (20-39%) and very low (0-19%).

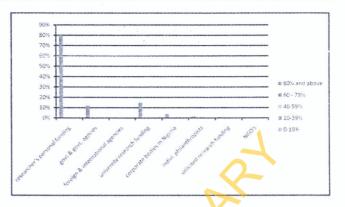


Figure 1: Levels of Research Funding in the Nigerian University System by Various Stakeholders

(a) Research funding: Researcher's personal funding of research undertaking: 80% or respondents, Government and government agencies 12%, foreign and international agencies, university research funding 15%, corporate bodies in Nigeria 4%, individual philanthropists 2%, solicited research funding 1%, NGO's.

The above chart reveals that researches undertaking by academic/researchers in the Nigerian university system are most self-sponsored as attested to by 80% of the subjects in this study. Every other sponsor contributes only a paltry quantum of fund to research undertakings in the system. This confirms the results of the studies on research and dissemination of research findings and research results communication respectively undertaking by Onuka and Onabamiro (2010) and Onuka and Durowoju (2011) that researches undertaken by academics and other researchers are hardly sponsored due to lack of funds; and Onuka (2007) that lack of fund deter teachers from undertaking research for self and systemic improvement. The finding also corroborates the opinion of Kasozi (2009) on the poor state of higher education funding in Uganda and indeed of all Sub-Saharan Africa with the exemption of perhaps South Africa. It equally negates the thrust of undertaking research, which according to Kothari (2004), is invention necessary for development. This unpleasant development thus, makes research efforts in the Nigerian higher education system exercises in futility. And this cannot but hinder rapid national development that Nigerians earnestly yearn for. It also implies the need for establishing a higher education contributory research fund mechanism, where every stakeholder in the education industry including employers of

labour, the individual academics/researchers, government and government agencies, philanthropists among others are made and/or encouraged at least between 0.5% and 1% of their annual income to the Fund for purpose of driving viable and profitable research undertakings by the university system. As it has become an obvious fact that research undertaking often results in invention and innovation, the need for collaborative funding of researches from conception to utilisation with research communication and dissemination in between cannot be over-flogged.

(a) Dissemination of research funding levels: individual researcher's 20%; government and government agencies 41%, international/ foreign agencies 33%, corporate bodies 1%, individual philanthropists nil, NGO's 31%.

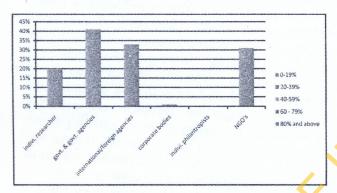


Figure 2: Level of Research Finding Communication/Dissemination Funding in the Nigerian University System by Various Stakeholders

The findings as depicted in Figure 2 show that just like the case of extremely low level of research funding in Nigerian universities, funding of research finding dissemination is low. However, sponsors appear to be more interested in funding dissemination of the findings of whatever research undertaking they have funded, possibly because it is likely to boost their corporate social responsibility image with the possible attendant fanfare and publicity. Even though, the finding seems to contradict the findings of Onuka and Onabamiro (2010) and Onuka and Durowoju (2011) that dissemination of research findings is very poor, it rather tends to confirms it in the light of the fact that what is sponsored in terms of research by these various stakeholders is also very low. It, however, implies they tend, in most or some cases, to incorporate the cost of dissemination in the funds they allocate for sponsoring researches in the university system. This also reveals the fact that only little attention is paid to research by sponsors and yet they are eager to show case the little investment they have made in researching at the university level for what may termed in the Nigerian parlance as public relations. The major implication for stakeholders is the need to pool resources together to facilitating higher education involvement in researching for rapid national development of the country and indeed all of Africa in line with the finding of Bamiro and Adedeji (2010), which reports that most of the sponsored researches in Nigerian universities were undertaking by Foundations outside Nigeria and/or international organisations. Yet, Nigeria has a substantial number of men and women highly endowed by God with the wherewithal to do so. The few foundations that exist in Nigeria are more interested in organizing annual lectures, paying only little attention to scholarship and national development which research usually drives. Whereas university research undertakings engender mentoring of students who are the future drivers of national economy and its rapid growth and development, the lack of it, therefore, inhibits mentoring of university students and junior academics alike for sustainable quality high level manpower and future leadership production.

Table 3
Chi-square Analysis of the Difference between
Expected Level and Actual Level of
Collaborative Funding of Research in the
Nigerian University System

Stakeholders collaboration in research funding	$X^2$ Obs.	$X^2$ Critical	-	Crammers' V
The perception by university academics	535.4	42.1	0.05	0.83

The above table clearly shows that there is very significant difference between the expected level of collaborative research funding in the university system and what actually takes place, on the negative side, implying that the actual level is far less the expected level. A revelation that collaborative research funding hardly exist in the Nigerian university system, as the overwhelming majority of the subjects in the study (83%), as shown by Crammer's V coefficient, who are mostly primarily researchers feel that there are no much collaborative research funding in the system. This tallies with the earlier findings of the study to the

extent that little or no locally collaborative research funding endeavours exist in the system safe for the Education Task Fund approach to such collaboration in research undertakings, which is, however, far from ideal. It further conforms to the earlier findings of Bamiro and Adedeji (2010) as can be inferred from their work, Onuka and Onabamiro (2010), Onuka and Durowoju (2011), and Kasozi (2009) all pointing towards poor funding of the entire university education and its research mandate in particular. And it is a well-known fact that the university system is a chief driver of development effort of any nation, because it provides the nation with the crop relevant manpower at the managerial and leadership levels to drive its economic growth and development (Onuka and Emunemu, 2009). The research output of the system plays a significant and substantial role in this direction. It, therefore, calls for deliberate attempt at collaborative research funding to engender this role of contributing significantly through research to the rapid growth and development of the nation. The need to sensitize stakeholders to embark on collaborative research funding for rapid national development cannot be overemphasised as well as the urgent for the creation a forum to galvanise funds for collaborative researching in the Nigerian university system, if mentoring in the university system were to be engendered, because that is a major way of producing relevant quality human capital to drive rapid national development.

# CONCLUSION

The study shows the important role research plays in national development, and also that the primary agent of research in any nation is the university system. It concludes that the neglect of university research undertakings is perilous to rapid national development which Nigeria so badly needs. Invariably, therefore if research is not well-funded. little can be done to mentor university academics and students to drive sustainable national development, because its product would not have been well-groomed. Furthermore, the study reveals that very insignificant amount of research findings which are themselves far between because of lack of funds for research are ever disseminated to the consuming publics. The study then proposes that if collaborative research funding can be galvanized for the system, there shall be improved researching by the university system and this will in turn drive invention and innovation by the system rapid national development. It thus, concluded that efforts

must be made to encourage corporate bodies, philanthropic people, government agencies, the individual researchers/academics to contribute at least between a half per cent and one per cent of their annual income to a national research funding pool to engender proper and adequate collaborative funding of research undertakings by Nigerian universities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing findings of, and conclusion from this study, the following recommendations were made:

- That efforts by made to encourage the organized private sector and well-endowed individual Nigerians as well as government agencies to contribute meaningfully towards funding research undertaking and dissemination in the university sub-sector of the higher education sector of the Nigerian economy as an interim measure.
- for corporate bodies including multinationals and individually well-endowed Nigerians to contribute funding researching in the Nigerian university to engender rapid national development be urgently undertaken by the relevant national bodies.
- That a formidable research funding policy to engender collaborative research funding in the Nigerian university system be formulated and implemented, so that Nigerians can voluntarily and freely contribute to research funding in Nigerian universities.
- And as a long-term measure, a mechanism should be put in place to make it compulsory for certain persons such as academics/ researchers, well-endowed individual Nigerians, corporate bodies, government, universities and high government personnel and workers in Nigerian-based foreign missions and organisations should contribute at least between 0.5% and 1% of their annual income to such a Fund, so set up. Such mechanism can be known as Collaborative Research Fund, which will galvanise and dispense the funds competitively equitably.

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