

TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVISION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This paper explores the multifaceted challenges that tertiary institutions in Nigeria encounter in effectively implementing community service programs for their host communities. Utilizing a quantitative methodology relying on secondary data sources from both print and online mediums, the study employed content analysis to distill and analyze relevant literature. Key findings highlight systemic issues such as the marginalization of community service priorities, inadequate financial resources, strained relationships between institutions and their host communities, deficiencies in infrastructure, pervasive corruption, heightened insecurity, and the absence of a cohesive national framework for integrating tertiary education with community development initiatives. Additionally, recurrent strike actions among academic staff further complicate program continuity and effectiveness. In response to these challenges, the study proposes a series of strategic recommendations. These include advocating for increased budget allocations to enhance institutional capabilities, fostering collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and communities, prioritizing the development and implementation of robust community service programs, urgently addressing infrastructural deficiencies, enacting and enforcing policies to curb corruption through innovative technologies like artificial intelligence, and allocating a dedicated portion of institutional budgets specifically for community service initiatives. Furthermore, governmental intervention to address underlying security concerns and improve the welfare and working conditions of academic staff is crucial for sustaining long-term program viability and success.

Keywords: Community Service Programme, Tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Many scholars in different times has given their own definitions of tertiary education. For instance Tertiary education is an educational system designed to solve local, national and international pressing problems (Ogunode & Musa 2024). Tertiary education fosters individual development and growth as well as impacts positively on the society at large (Schrader-King, 2024). Tertiary education can be defined as the planned and organized system of learning designed for the total development of individuals and the total transformation of the society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie 2023).

Basically, tertiary education is a subset of the general society comprising of the collection of different people with different cultural and ethnic background, life styles, living standards and moral values (Ogunode & Odo 2023) participating in educational activities. The diversities of formal and informal educational activities carried out in tertiary institutions (Singh, 2015) usually puts into consideration the value system obtainable within a particular country. Thus, according to Ogunode and Mcbrown (2022), tertiary education is an educational system that advances the implementation of the teaching programme, research programme and community service programme for the socio-economic, socio-cultural and technological development of a particular country.

Tertiary education or higher education covers a wider range of higher institutions of learning which include the university and other institutions such as polytechnics, mono-technics, colleges of education, technical training institutes, (Idowu 2020). Ibrahim (2017) stated that higher institutions are very important tools in meeting the socio-cultural and developmental needs of a country. Tertiary education was defined Federal Republic of Nigeria in her national Policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI) (FRN, 2013).

The goals on higher education in Nigeria Education according to the National Policy on Education (NPE) are to: Contribute to national development through high level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013). From the above, tertiary education are higher education enterprises that advances knowledge production and community development through teaching, research and community service provision. Tertiary education whole responsible is production of knowledge and problem solving.

Tertiary institutions are mandated to implement teaching, research and community service programme. The community service programme is the last cardinal programme of the tertiary institutions with much implication to the development of host communities and the nation at large. It has appear that some tertiary institutions are not given maximum attention to the development of community service programme. For instance, a study by Bidunni (2013) that investigated the roles being played by higher education institutions in the development of the communities and the society at large in Nigeria revealed that the development ascribed to the communities and society is hardly traced to the research findings of the institutions, and only few people are aware of the relevance of

the institutions in terms of social development contributions. It was concluded that community services, research findings and teaching of the higher institutions should impart positively on the environment, people and the society. Also, the investigation by Adewusi (2013) in Ondo State, Nigeria, discovered that availability of community information services were rare in the communities that made up Akoko North-West Local Government of the state, and the rural dwellers were unaware of the potentials inherent in utilizing services of community information centre (CIC). The study concluded that the communities yearn for provision of CICs, with a view to empowering, changing and transforming their life socially, economically, educationally, technologically, and politically for the better. This is observed in most developing countries in particularly Nigeria. Peter (2015) submitted that more emphasizes are given to the development of teaching and research programme while community service programme seems neglected by Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is based on this that this paper seeks to examine the various problems militating against effective delivery of community services programme to the various host communities by tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study paper titled tertiary education and community services programme provision in Nigeria is anchored on social role theory. The social role theory was propounded by Ralf Dahrendorf, Robert K Merton and Gorge Herbert Mead in 1956. A social role refers to the behaviours and responsibilities expected of individuals in society. In terms of gender, social roles prescribe certain behaviours to men and women. Role theory is the theory that an individual's behaviour is the performance of roles that are organized into categories defined by society. Individuals aim to meet these roles, which encompass certain expectations, responsibilities, and behaviours (S.M 2022). Liken this theory to the tertiary institutions. The tertiary institutions are expected to carry out some special roles.

This theory is relevant to this paper because tertiary institutions by nature and designed are meant to carry out some fundamental roles for the social, economic and technological advancement of the communities, states and the nations. Tertiary institutions globally are known to be saddled with the responsibilities of providing community service programme to aid community development. It is expected of the tertiary institutions to consciously carry out the mandate to their host communities.

Concept of Community Services

Community service programme of tertiary institutions are social and economic projects that are designed to serve community purposely in the fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and child care. Community service programmes are organized projects, supervised activities that are a direct benefit to the community and are designed to improve the welfares of the whole communities (Lawinside, 2024). Community service programme refer to structured programm undertakes to improve the social, economic of host communities. Communities service programme are geared towards solving community problems. Community service programme are designed to promote positive development in the communities and improve social changes.

Community service programme is the third cardinal programme of the tertiary institutions. Community service programme is an organized and planned service programme of higher institutions for the benefit and betterment of their host community. Community service programme of higher institutions are community inclined services initiated by the institutions to develop the communities. Community services of higher institution are services provided by institutions to benefits the community people (Ogunode, Iyabode & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022). From the above, community service programme are third cardinal programme of tertiary institutions meant for the development of the host communities. Community service programme are special and unique

programme of higher education for the transformation, development of the communities and to specifically address identified community based problems.

Example of community services of tertiary institutions include; sensitization and awareness programme; employment opportunities programme, agricultural research programme, health service programme, small scale business programme, community youth empowerment programme, social programme, information sharing programme, community engagement programme, adult education programme, women education programme (Ogunode, Hassan & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2023), sanitation and climate changes programme (Olatunde-Aiyedun, Olatunde & Ogunode, 2022), research findings sharing programme, sport development programme. For tertiary institutions, Emezie, and Igwe(2017) noted that their communities service could come in form of employment of indigenes of the host communities, scholarship opportunities to deserving students from communities, extension of healthcare services by the health department of the institutions whereas the academic libraries can donate books to rural schools which are less privileged. Although academic libraries are not independent but are part of the tertiary institutions, their role as information providers impacts positively on the environment. They are considered a kind of social responsibility due to their contributions to social, educational, cultural and economic aspects (Eid, Altamimi & Shaheen, 2016).

The objective of community services programme includes; community development, community empowerment, community engagement, community sensitization on national health or social issues, information libraries services, training programme, charity, participation in environmental protection, feeding of homeless, donation to community, provision of scholarship for community underprivileged people, provision of empowerment programme for people with disabilities, holds workshop on peacebuilding and peacemaking, holds conferences on gender equality programme, special health programme, climate change awareness (Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2021) and youth employment.

On the importance of community services programme, Ogunode, et al (2022) asserted that the implementation of community service programme by tertiary institutions has impacted positively on the development of host communities. Community service programme of higher institutions have brought socio-economic and technological development to the host communities and the country at large. A study was conducted by Ogunode and Iroegbu (2018) and the result disclosed that Federal University Wukari is achieving its objectives in the areas of teaching, researching and community services. This study also revealed that the impact of Federal University Wukari on the Wukari community includes employment generation for the people, expansion of social infrastructural facilities, aiding the social economic development of the people, attraction of Federal presence into Wukari, production of manpower for the community, the state and the country at large, encouraging the indigenes to appreciate university education, attract international donors and provision of community services into the community.

The sustainability of institutions, organizations or any society depends largely on the creative capacity of the institution to be capable of effectively performing its functions by offering the required services for the sustenance of the system. Services performed are those that can significantly contribute within the context of a sound macro-economic and political environment to the growth of Nigerian educational institutions and the society (Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona 2009; Ekpo & Aiyedun, 2019; Aiyedun, Olatunde-Aiyedun and Ogunode 2021). Also, Academic librarians according to Emezie, et al (2017) already accustomed to delivering information literacy programs are uniquely positioned to contribute to the physical and economic-well-being of members of the host community through the provision of CIS as corporate social responsibility.

Method

This paper is a position paper. The paper employed quantitative research method that depends on used of secondary data. The secondary data were collected from both print and online publications. Content analysis was adopted for the analysis of the data to reduce them to suitable size that fit the topic of the paper.

Problems Militating against Implementation of Community Service Programme by Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Some of the problems militating against implementation of community service programme by tertiary institutions in Nigeria includes; poor prioritization of community services programme by tertiary institutions, poor funding of tertiary institutions, poor school-community relationship, lack of infrastructure facilities, corruption, insecurity, lack of national programme on tertiary institutions and community development and strike actions.

Poor prioritization of Community Services Programme

Tertiary institutions are saddled with the responsibilities of implementation of community service programme to their respective host communities. Poor prioritization of community services programme by tertiary institutions in Nigeria appear to be responsible for the underdevelopment of the community services programme development. Tertiary institutions pay more attention to the teaching and research programme and less attention is given to the third cardinal programme which is the community services programme. Adeyemi (2018) noted that the community service that are very essential to the socio-economic and peaceful development of the communities have be neglected by the various tertiary institutions across the country pursuing on teaching and research programme with every human and materials resources at their disposer. Peter (2015) and Adeyemi (2018) pointed out that tertiary institutions are not giving maximum attention to the development of their community services programme in Nigeria and this is responsible for poor community based researches and development.

Poor funding of tertiary institutions

Poor funding of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has affected implementation of tertiary institutions' programme. Tertiary institutions programme implementation requires a lot of funds. These funds are needed to procure both human and materials resources to support the delivery of the programme. It is unfortunate that funds coming in from federal or state government and those from private and international donor are not adequately enough to guarantee effective implementation of tertiary institutions programme. Udida, Bassey, Udofia, and Egbona, concluded that the major issue in educational development is shortage of funds. One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Higher educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. This situation calls for increased fund initiative from both the government and educational stakeholders so as to sustain the tempo and growth of education industry. The inability of the Nigerian government to objectively accept and implement the 15%-20% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO impact negatively on the performance and sustainability of higher education. Thus, it has become obvious that Nigeria's neglect of the funding formula is detrimental to higher educational institution performance and development aspiration as quality performance is the veritable instrument for sustenance of education system. This neglect has further precipitated crises in the entire higher educational systems as effective teaching, research and community service are no longer taking place seriously.

Poor school-community relationship

Poor school-community relationship in Nigeria also appear to have been responsible for the underdevelopment of community service programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions. School-community relationship is defined as the positive link between the school and the host communities that results to cordial relationship and positive development. School-community relationship is an essential sub-component of the school system that emphasize on robust relationship of school and community for symbiotic development. It is unfortunate that most managers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria seems not to recognize the importance and has ignore it. Their inability to recognize the vital roles of school-community relationship has made some of them not to develop any programme or policies that will strengthened such tides that supposed to have aided mutually development in both schools and communities.

Inadequate of modern infrastructure facilities

Inadequate of modern infrastructure facilities has also militated against effective delivery of community services programme in Nigeria by some tertiary institutions. Infrastructure facilities refer to social capital used by tertiary institutions for implementation of teaching, research and community services programme. Infrastructure facilities are resources both row and finished that assist in the execution of programme in the tertiary institutions. Community service programme implementation requires a lot of infrastructure facilities and these facilities are likely not available in some of the tertiary institutions across the country. For example, Community services programme implementation needs some modern facilities that will enable service provider meets online always and discuss with community members and share information on vital areas of a projects. These facilities requires a lot of internet service and stable power. Ishaya and Ogunode, (2021) observed that internet services and electricity are not 24 hours available in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria and this may likely affect the effectively provision of community service programme. Echono, (2023) noted that community services needs modern infrastructure facilities for implementation and some of these facilities are not available to support research-community based. There are several challenges arising from lack of Infrastructure and these includes:

- i. **Inadequate laboratory facilities.** Research, especially in fields such as science, engineering, and medicine, heavily relies on well-equipped laboratories. The absence of state-of-the-art laboratory facilities limits researchers' ability to conduct experiments, analyze data, and make breakthroughs. Second,
- ii. **limited access to information.** Lack of modern libraries and online resources limits researchers' access to up-to-date information, hindering their ability to review existing literature, build upon previous studies, and remain at the forefront of their fields.
- iii. **Unreliable electricity supply.** Frequent power outages disrupt research activities and pose challenges for running experiments, storing sensitive samples, and maintaining essential equipment.
- iv. **Inadequate internet connectivity.** Access to high-speed internet is crucial for collaboration, data sharing, and communication with the global scientific community. Slow or unreliable internet connections hinder researchers' ability to engage in international research networks.
- v. **Poor transportation systems.** Poor transportation systems make it difficult for researchers to travel to conferences, workshops, and collaborative meetings. This isolation limits exposure to new ideas and impedes knowledge exchange (Echono, 2023).

Corruption

Corruption in the administration of tertiary institutions has also affected effective implementation of community services programme. Corruption is the misuse or abuse of public office for private gains

and wide array of illicit behaviour e.g. bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, grafts, theft, embezzlement, falsification of academic records, kickbacks, influence peddling (Ahmodu, & Sofoluwe, 2018). Corruption in this study refers to the inadequate provision of educational fund, facilities and infrastructure as well as political favouritism in appointing educational managers. Corruption in education has also threatened Nigeria's citizens' equal access to education which has a negative effect on the poor and less privileged people in the country (Kadir, 2018). Corruption in the educational sector is basically the inappropriate behaviour of individuals' holding authoritative position in this sector that bring about personal gain and is detrimental to the standard of education and national advancement (Kanibin, 2019). Funds allocated for implementation of programme implementation in the various tertiary institutions have been mismanaged and looted by some of the official in charge. Corruption in the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has hampered the development of community service programme in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. In 2020, Transparency International maintained in their annual report noted that 66 percent of the money Nigerian government's allocate to education is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is common place in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, (Premium Times, 2020). Corruption has hampered effective execution of tertiary education programme and corruption has reduce funds in the system (Ogunode, & Stephen, 2021; Ogunode, Josiah & Ajape 2021).

Insecurity

Insecurity is a major problem militating against effective community services programme implementation in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing insecurities problems in also every states across the federation. Most of these insecurities are penetrated in the communities and rural areas where various forms of tertiary institutions-communities based researches are been carried out. Insecurity in Nigeria has led to death of many researchers, lecturers and students. Ogunode, Umeora and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) noted that the impact of insecurity on the administration of post-basic education and career development in the south east geo-political zone of Nigeria. Insecurities problems in some Northern and Southern states has led to school closure, unstable academic calendar, destruction of infrastructure facilities and displacement of communities members. Insecurities challenges have frustrated effective teaching, research and community service programme implementation in Nigeria.

Lack of national programme on tertiary institutions and community development

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are supervised by various agencies and commissions. These commission are established to make laws and supervises the tertiary institutions across Nigeria. National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).The policies and direction from these commissions has helped the tertiary institutions to restructured and readjusted and strengthen their programmes for better efficiency and effectiveness. Lack of national programme on tertiary institutions and community development from these respective agencies and commissions may likely be responsible for why many tertiary institutions have not strengthened their community service programme. Ogunode, and Ukozor, (2022) and Victor (2007) observed that some of these agencies are weak in the delivery of their mandate and this also affected institutions under them. So, the inability of these agencies and commission to direct and come up with roadmap policy for the development of community service programme delivery by various tertiary institutions across Nigeria has affected the effective implementation of the community service programmes by the Nigerian tertiary institutions (Ogunode, Audu & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

Strike actions

Another problem affecting smooth implementation of community service programme of Nigerian tertiary institutions is the strike actions. According to Hornby (2001), strike is a period of time when an organized group of employees of a company stops working because of a disagreement over pay or conditions. It can be seen as an action/attitude exhibited by a group of people (that is, employees or students) to express their level of disagreement with a view to attracting favourable responses from those concerned. Ogunode (2020) observes strike action is an endemic problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Nigerian public universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union groups within the system. The actions are frustrating the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The reasons for the strike actions by union groups include; underfunding of the public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and poor implementation of agreements reached with union groups, and poor working conditions. Adavbiele (2015) opined that once there is strike action, institutions/schools are forced to close down and there will be a temporary stoppage of teaching and learning activities in the concerned institutions. This temporary refusal of lecturers to work will in turn result in developing and redesigning new academic calendar in order to make up for the period. Due to this strike action, Technical education students may not be able to complete their academic work within the prescribed period as stated in the prospectus. For instance, a 4-year degree programme in Technical education may take more than 4 years due to the strike action as it is currently being experienced in the country. Also, Ogunode, Ugochukwu, and Jegede (2022); Lawan, and Ogunode (2021) and Okoli, Ogbondah and Ewor, (2016) concluded that during strike actions in the tertiary institutions, almost every activities and programme are suspended. They went further to observe that strike actions affect smooth implementation of teaching, research and community service programme.

Findings

The paper identified poor prioritization of community services programme by tertiary institutions, poor funding, poor school-community relationship, lack of infrastructure facilities, corruption, insecurity and lack of national programme on tertiary institutions and community development and strike actions as challenges militating against effective community services programme of tertiary institutions to their host communities in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Community service programs constitute a fundamental component of the mission of tertiary institutions, aimed at fostering community development. This paper has examined the various challenges that Nigerian tertiary institutions face in implementing effective community service programs for their respective host communities. The study concludes that several significant obstacles impede the success of these programs, including the low prioritization of community service by tertiary institutions, inadequate funding, strained school-community relationships, insufficient infrastructure, pervasive corruption, insecurity, the absence of a cohesive national program for tertiary education and community development, and frequent strike actions.

Based on these findings, the paper offers the following recommendations:

1. **Increase Budgetary Allocations:** There should be an increment in the budgetary allocation for tertiary institutions in Nigeria to ensure they have the necessary resources to implement and sustain community service programs effectively.
2. **Foster Positive School-Community Relations:** Managers of tertiary institutions should work to establish and maintain positive relationships between schools and their host communities to facilitate mutual benefits.

3. **Prioritize Community Service Development:** Tertiary institutions should prioritize the development and implementation of robust community service programs as a core part of their mission.
4. **Improve Infrastructure:** The government should invest in modern infrastructure facilities across all tertiary institutions to support the effective delivery of community services.
5. **Develop National Programs:** Supervisory agencies should develop comprehensive programs for community service development and enforce these policies within tertiary institutions.
6. **Allocate Dedicated Funds:** A specific percentage, such as 10% of the total allocation to tertiary institutions, should be earmarked for the development of community service programs.
7. **Address Insecurity:** The government should take decisive actions to address the factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria, ensuring a safe environment for community service initiatives.
8. **Combat Corruption:** The deployment of artificial intelligence and other innovative technologies should be considered to manage and reduce corruption within tertiary institutions.
9. **Enhance Staff Welfare:** The government should increase the salaries of lecturers and honor various agreements to prevent strike actions, thereby ensuring stability and continuity in community service programs.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigerian tertiary institutions can overcome the identified challenges and significantly enhance their community service programs, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of their host communities.

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