

# **TOWARDS IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES FOR QUALITY AND STANDARD IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract**

This article takes a cursory look at the extent to which the Nigerian higher education system have access to quality and functional infrastructural facilities in implementing educational programs and activities in her schools. School infrastructures are very important in teaching and learning in every tier of education. The role of infrastructural facilities in schools motivated both staff and students in improving academic performances all round. These infrastructural facilities comprises good classrooms, good lecture halls/theatres, up to date /related library facilities, laboratories equipment, extra-curricular facilities, good dormitories, mechanical workshop/equipments for engineering education, social amenities among other facilities needed for quality and standard in Nigerian education. It is expected that within the framework of the National Policy on Education believed that our higher schools are to enjoy the best dividends in the areas of quality infrastructures that would help in achieving our overall goals of education. The article observed that in spite of the efforts of higher education in the country have been chained with many problems such as lacks of quality facilities of all kinds. For instance, lack of laboratory equipment, insufficient ICT centers, among others. The paper concludes that basic infrastructural facilities should be provided in order to address major challenges in teaching and learning process. This is because academic achievement is associated with functional and reliable facilities

**Key;** Infrastructure, Higher education, quality education,

## **Introduction**

In both developed and developing nations, education is considered as essential tool through which people lives are determined. Nations rise and fall depending on how educational policies and programs are being perceived and implemented. Functional educational facilities help in promoting quality and standard education at all levels. Nigeria as a nation in Africa is not left out from educational race, which in Nigerian educational blueprint always emphasizes on provision of quality education to all Nigerian citizens irrespective of gender and socio-political level of

people. Federal government further emphasizes on provision of functional educational facilities in both areas of arts and sciences towards improving quality and standards of education with reference to higher education in order to attain her development plan.

However, with this laudable offered made to Nigerian citizens, it is regrettable to say that Nigerian government had introduced two different programs on education since her political freedom from colonial power, educational institutions continue to received different orientation in areas of provisions of needed facilities for their takeoff. With nature of democratic system of governance to some extent affects smooth implementation of academic programmes in most public schools, and teaching and learning process are being holds in empty or vacuum spaces without any basic infrastructural support.

Beside, ideal educational policies and programs are being implemented in conducive and well controlled environment with all the needed educational facilities that would help in achieving our desired educational goals. In line with the specification given for the provision of functional facilities to Nigerian schools is questionable. Many education facilities in Nigerian higher schools has over stay and some of these facilities cease to work, especially scientific and library facilities to some extent are outdated. Lecture halls/ theatres are too small leading to overcrowdings and clashes, student's hostels are also too small and lack electricity, poor social amenities, out dated extra-curricular facilities in some schools among other. The result of lack of educational facilities in schools affects our development plan and some instances reduce the image of our nation as the giant of African nations.

### **The concept of infrastructural facilities**

Infrastructure is defined as the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a given society, academic institutions of teaching and learning or an enterprise. Infrastructure can also be seen as essential tools needed for the smooth running or function of any given activities in school. Beside the above operational view, infrastructure can be described as functional or workable structures necessary for running of nations economy and development plan of any type we wishes ourselves<sup>1</sup>.

According to functionalists theorist stated that the progress of any given society whether primitive or modern society, depends largely on the functional structures of the society<sup>2</sup> These functional structures emphasized by the functionalists stick to those infrastructures that can help in determining positive steps of economic development of a given state.

In view of the above description, the term infrastructure has wider connection to human development both politically, economically and socio-cultural aspect that can helps in moving our societies towards competing in global race of educational achievement. According to Admoler opined that development is the qualitative change or a progressive series of such changes in economic system. Such qualitative aspect of living is made possible by infrastructural facilities, such as roads, good health care facilities, basic education, good water supply, electricity, housing scheme development and transport facilities<sup>3</sup>,

In more specific sense, the functionalist to some extent added that a nation's development plan cannot be fully achieved without educational system<sup>4</sup>. These imply that educational facilities if accessible will help to actualize the aims and objectives of education at every level.. These facilities refers to conducive school environment, comprises functional laboratory equipments, liberated library facilities for students research, good and furnished lecture halls and theatres, space classrooms, good accommodation, good water supply and electricity among other that would help in mass achievements of our educational goals. With this, infrastructural facilities are essential tool for human development.

Therefore, any nation's education system with these facilities available would enhance students learning condition and any nation lack these facilities experiences failure educational achievement.

### **Status of the learning Infrastructure in Nigerian Higher Schools**

The quality of higher education is determined by her infrastructural facilities and lack of these facilities affects academics programmes entirely. Federal government in most educational press continues to make promises on provision of quality and related educational facilities to schools regardless of their locations.. All government's functions on educational matters to some extent have been touted as an accelerator of problems to quality education delivery at the higher levels of education. Since the establishment of some states and especially private higher schools, most of these schools admitted higher number of students without taking cognizance of the facilities on ground.

However, numbers of challenges continue to plaque education deliveries which to some extent graduating students who may no have space in the global market. In view of this, the following are some of the major challenges that leads to overstretched facilities in most higher schools entirely. It is emphatically stated that crowded or uncomfortable school environment lead to low morale among teachers and students as well as it affects the society directly.

Fraizers stated that lack of basic school infrastructure leads to all kind of malpractice in school examinations<sup>5</sup>. Ejionuece contributed that the physical infrastructure in schools in their poor conditions continue to adversely affects the contribution of higher education to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>6</sup>

However, considering the nature of basic infrastructure in Nigerian higher education revealed that most of these facilities are over-used and some classrooms and lecture halls / theatres are small, while some are filled with dilapidated furniture, rough floor, windows and ceiling. Laboratories centers /equipments to some extent are adequate but they are in small size and too congested during students practical. It is based on these problems that Luckey stated that overcrowded schools had students scoring significantly lower than those schools with qualitative facilities for teaching and learning<sup>7</sup>. With this imply that poor physical infrastructures are common features in many educational institutions in Nigeria especially in basic and post basic schools nationwide. Most schools are characterized by ramshackle facilities. In addition, new

programs and activities and its expanded intake have been suggested without matching provision of the physical facilities.

Kibui commented that education throughout the world has for many centuries emphasized a selective function regardless of available infrastructures in schools<sup>8</sup>. A number of studies show that many schools system particularly those in urban and high poverty areas are plagued with poor supply of relevant infrastructures, decayed buildings that threaten the health, safety and learning opportunities of students. Good facilities even in their quantities appear to be an impact on pre-condition for students learning provided other conditions are present that support strong academic programs in the school (learning environment), are term used liberally in educational discourse because of the emerging use of information technologies for educational purpose.

Fisher conducted research on the impact of school infrastructures on student's outcomes and behaviors in Georgia; he further stated that academic achievement improves with improved building conditions. He further established a correlation between school class size and student's achievement that are overcrowded with students in lecture halls affects learners' achievements. Base on this view one cannot expect high level of student's academic performances where school buildings are poorly located and substandard. Adequate and current infrastructural facilities are the problems of Nigerian education at all levels.

Despite all these challenges, the National Policy on Education highlighted the relevance of higher education if well funded these include;

- contributing to national development through high level manpower
- Developing and Inculcating proper values for the survival of the individual and society
- Developing intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment
- Acquiring physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful member of the society
- Promoting scholarship and community service
- Fostering national unity
- Promoting national and international understanding and interaction<sup>9</sup>

Overshooting the carrying capacity of most Nigerian higher schools is these objectives which needed to be achieving continuously. Adedipe described carrying capacity as the maximum number of students that a university can admitted for quality education based on human and material resources, infrastructure is among the important operational inputs to any instructional programs<sup>10</sup>. It also constitutes basic elements that are necessary for delivering of good teaching and learning, and these infrastructural facilities are vital in the development of qualitative higher education nationwide.

Ejiogu outlined four important factors in an attempt to balance the qualitative and quantitative growth of the education system in Nigeria. These range from the quality number of infrastructure

(in form buildings, machinery and equipments) through the usage of the maintenance of the infrastructures<sup>11</sup>. From the above views, the researchers further submitted that the quality of output is a function of infrastructure that determines students learning environment and their motivation to learn. Therefore, if quality is to be ensured in the Nigerian tertiary institutions, the infrastructural-base of the system need to be improved upon.

However, several studies and reports emphasized that infrastructural resources required for production of effective process in a short supply to Nigerian tertiary schools. Lecture halls, lecture rooms, laboratories, students hostels, library spaces are grossly inadequate.

National University Commission (NUC) 2004, in the communiqué of the presidential visitation panel that looked into the operation of Federal Universities between 1999 and 2003 reported that physical facilities at the universities were in deplorable condition<sup>12</sup>. It is saddening to note that the equipment for research, teaching and learning are either lacking or very inadequate and in bad shape to permit the universities the freedom of embarking on the basic functions of academics. It was some of these issues that some major programs in most universities lost accreditation as result of infrastructural decay which some find it difficult to regain or approval for continuity in programs.

Over many of higher education programs, various academics unions embarked on strike challenges the provision spelt out in the National Policy on Education which failed to implement due corrupt practice that have engulfed our nature of democratic dividends in the country. The best dividends to which a democratic nation can give to her citizens is quality and standard education without which such nation will remain as third world nation developing nation.

### **Why we need Infrastructural facilities for Quality Higher Education in Nigeria**

Qualitative higher education programs of any nation constitutes the pivot on which the development of such nation is based. Therefore, proper and correct acquisition of basic skills and knowledge by the students enrolled in any given nation school is fundamental to the growth and development. The need of infrastructural support highlighted that, higher quality education and training required that appropriate infrastructure be provided by the government in order to achieve her educational vision. Therefore, all students and their staff deserve safety, technology-reading, facilities designs for teaching and learning and adequate decent facilities structured around their learning environment for practical.

More importantly, completion rate and satisfaction with all educational programs are closely related to the infrastructure that can be provided in schools. Good physical buildings with functional and related educational equipments are essential for student's success at any level. In view of this, the bridge between functional infrastructures and effective student learning is of great importance. Looking at our present higher schools in the present fourth republic there is no doubt that available infrastructure even in their scarcity in schools play significant role in the welfare of students. Even with the introduction of quality assurance in almost all Nigerian higher

schools, yet there are major challenges that reveals low standard and as well as low qualities of schools and their associate products

### **Challenges of infrastructural facilities in Nigerian higher schools**

Educational activities with genuine system of government principles of improving infrastructural facilities yielded some positive values that can promote entire society to a greater height. The Nigerian government over the years has faith on education as the highest tool for societal development. Federal government further described as an instrument for national development.

But unfortunately, the de-functionality of the Nigerian education has become a source of worry to many Nigerian educators of both past and present, stakeholders, philosophers, educational planner, educators and the entire nation alike. The present principles of governance in Nigerian failed to address the basic issues in the nation's education sector. For instance, unemployment, poverty, insurgency and some other contemporary issues are on the increase as result of weak infrastructure in all tiers of institution. Digital technology such as Internet services, library service among others provisions on her educational blueprint, the Nigerian National Planning Commission couple with experience of the past instabilities governance of schools to some extent described the country's educational system as dysfunctional<sup>14</sup>. The reasons for these characteristics included decaying infrastructural facilities leading to ill-prepared in terms of quality and standards in educational achievement'

It is regrettable that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an era dominated by science and technology, the Nigerian system of education has little or nothing to contributes to the globalization process. The nation education system even at this era of democratic system can best be useful for its sake while the same being irrelevant in the global race of educational achievements as result of infrastructural challenges in both public and some private tertiary schools nationwide. Couple with the above analysis, this paper identified the following as some of the major challenges as it continue lowering educational qualities, especially in the areas of science and technology system.

- **Infrastructural decay**, it is known fact that there is a steady decline in quality of infrastructure like lecture halls/rooms. Laboratories equipment, library facilities and a huge of other social amenities in Nigerian higher schools
- **Under/miss-funding constrains**. The gross under/miss-funding principle of educational sector, with specific reference to higher education in particular leads to total decline in the nation education system. The academic unions of these various institutions, especially (ASUU) embarked on strike action severally on the issues of revitalization of nation universities always become total war between ASUU and federal government on the issue of poor investment on university education entirely.
- **Politicization of education**, political directions are at the root of education policy, which in turn informs the direction of an education program. The program is subsequently processed at school and classroom levels to turn out the required product of education. Today, everything or policy pointed at political system for it implementation. Obanya, says, to play

the good politics, the type how the next generation in mind and to abandon bad politics, especially the type that merely thinks of the next generation. Bad politics in education is noticeable in virtually all that is done concerning education in Nigeria.

- **Bad governance.** The issue of bad governance, especially in the fourth republic is one of the major challenges to education entirely in Nigeria. Nigerian education ever before has the problem of bad governance since her political independence. But the current situations found, academics activities in most schools are under severe political instability and insecurity. Jega noted that the rate of political violence that has engulfed the nation is terrible. Corrupt politician with their principles of divide and rule strive in every way to dominate the people, to be perpetually in power and government officials are involved in corruption of the worst type<sup>15</sup>. World Bank in 2006 categorized Nigeria as one of the thirteen nations in the world facing the risk of collapse and is rated as the 7<sup>th</sup> most corrupt nation in the world perpetuated by government officials in general<sup>16</sup>. In the aspect of security challenges, the present government has invested much on security matters, yet some insurgencies are gaining their freedom from prison.
- With this kind of situations found available in all corners of Nigerian societies, Nigeria as a giant of African nations is seen by many especially the western world as an endangered place, unsafe for expatriates' and foreign investors and in conducive for investment.
- **Quality Assurance.** Okoli Noted that quality in higher education is multidimensional and embraces all functions and activities of universities including teaching, academics programmes, research and absolutely productivity, staffing, students, buildings, facilities and equipment<sup>17</sup>. Quality assurance in any university education has to do with efficiency and effectiveness in the running of every aspect of the institution. Therefore, with the above implies that Nigerian higher schools are victims of poor quality administration where every activity is chained due to lack of functional facilities entirely. According to World Bank noted that African universities are marked by inadequacies, lack of infrastructure, unprecedented corruption and mismanagement of public and private funds, thus the institution poor and incapacitated.

## Conclusion

The desire of quality and standards in Nigerian education, especially this 21<sup>st</sup> century demands for functional facilities at all levels of education. This will help teachers and students utilizes these facilities and equipment's in schools to enhance productivity. Functional infrastructure will also help in terms of actualizing the aims and objectives of education as spelt out on the National Policy on Education. Considering the current issues of poor infrastructure in schools, the federal government needs to redouble her efforts on educational matters

## The way forward

1. Government should make adequate funding of higher education and provision of needed infrastructure that would help students and staff in schools

2. The quality of higher education must not be compromised by over admission, over-crowdedness and multi-campus system
3. Basic infrastructural facilities should be provided in order to address major challenges in teaching and learning process
4. Development of high level of maintenance practice on the available facilities should be institutionalized. There is a need for implementation of a direct quality assurance program to ensure the maintenance standards are met.

#### **End notes**

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