

## Optimizing University Education for Sustainable Economic Development in Cross River State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated optimization of University education and sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria. Ex-post-facto design was used for the study. Population of the study was 21,049 lecturers with the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar having 6,021 and the University of Calabar, Calabar with 21,028. Sampling was done in multiple stages using stratified, proportionate and simple random techniques. A sample of 790 respondents were generously drawn from the population with the aid of Yamane (1967) formula. Two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The instrument for the study was Optimizing University Education and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (OUESDQ) developed by the researchers in line with a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was duly faced validated by three experts in Educational Test and Measurement of the University of Calabar. In order to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out and the reliability coefficient of the Cronbach Alpha statistic obtained for the sub-scales ranged from .80 to .91. The data obtained from the field were analyzed using One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at .05 level of significance. Results of the study showed that the sustainable economic development was significantly influenced by training ( $p = .000$ ,  $f = 10.125$ ) and funding ( $p = .014$ ,  $f = 4.261$ ). Base on the findings, it was recommended among others that, University staff training be made a priority by both the Federal and the State governments in order to optimize its potential for sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Optimizing university education, sustainable economic development

### **Introduction**

Nigeria as a nation has all it takes to be great and well developed by consciously planned and organized transformation efforts to renewably harness the rich and abundant human and non-human resources. Therefore, it cannot afford to be a bystander in global and modern civilization. University education is considered as the most superlative catalyst cum investment and critical imperative par excellence for the nation's desired sustainable economic development *ceteris paribus* fostered by proactively planned transformational strategies (Nwadiani, 2018).

Development is a value-added word. Accordingly, every individual and/or society naturally desire development moving from a given status to total advancement directed by selfless individuals of clear conscience and goodwill without compromise. Development in the views of Seer (1977) in Nwadiani, (2018) does not only mean capital accumulation and economic growth, but also the condition in which people such as in Cross River State have adequate food and job while income inequality among them is greatly reduced which brings about sustainable changes. It touches on quality of life such as social justice, equality for all citizens and full participation in the democratic process. Similarly, at the angle of individual, in the opinion of Rodney (1972) in Nwadiani (2018), development connotes increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing.

Economic development according to Mkpa (2017) is the cultivation and enhancement of the economic wealth of a nation, community or region for the improvement of the wellbeing of the inhabitants. This implies the efforts, products of the strategies, activities within a country that aims at improving the economic wellbeing and quality of life of the community by creating/or retaining jobs, supporting and growing incomes and the tax base.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Economic Development aims at addressing the key challenges for the 21st century towards people, planet, and prosperity such as climate change/destruction of nature, large scale conflict/wars, and income inequality, discrimination). Sustainable development pursues to satisfy the demands of current generations without undermining the ability of next generations to accomplish their own necessities (Armeanu, Vintila & Gherghina,2017). Ilechukwu and Njoku (2014) revealed that development is said to be sustainable, when it satisfies the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To achieve the objective(s) of sustainable economic development, therefore, University Education for Sustainable Economic Development (UESED) is necessary. This suggests that the University Educational programmes or curriculum have to be efficiently and effectively implemented to meet the needs of the present and future generations in the three interrelated areas of economy, human development and environment through critical thinking and conscious decision-making.

Nwadiani (2018) maintained that the Universities' aspiration of invigorating sustainable economic development needs properly trained, skilled work force, knowledgeable and selfless individuals of goodwill and impartial oriented political consciousness in the allocation of national resources such as material and immaterial resources. This can also be achieved as the university adopts and implements a well-planned skill-based education that seeks to produce the required human resources. Salvioni, Franzoni and Cassano (2017) stated that recent global debate on the integration of sustainable economic development in the quality of Universities that have the potential to bring about profound change, starting from capacity development programmes. They further opined that Knowledge has increasingly assumed the status of a driver of economic development. Universities are the most important promoters of the knowledge economy, not only because they produce brain workers, but also because they make their structures and the results of their activities available to the community: from laboratories to networks, from libraries to outcomes.

Capacity development is a programme designed to strengthen individual skills, competencies and abilities for optimal performance in an organization. It could also be viewed as training of one self from being a dwarf to becoming a giant knowledge wise. In this view, the person can rise from ordinary to extra-ordinary and excel in life through hard work, discipline and productive determination to prepare and succeed (Aboyeji, 2008). In the educational organization, it is considered necessary as programmes for teachers' continuous updating of their knowledge, skills, ideas, abilities, and competencies to meet the new challenges in these fast-growing changes in the society (Uchendu, 2011). In a study carried out by William (2006) on staff development programmes and secondary school teachers work performance in Uyo Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Three thousand and fifty three (3,053) teachers formed the population of the study. The sample of the study was three hundred and fifty (350) teachers who were randomly selected from thirty (30) secondary schools. ANOVA was adopted to analyze the data collected. Result indicated that staff training has significant relationship with work performance of teachers.

Money is very critical in a school management because it is used to construct buildings, purchase required equipment, pay staff salaries and allowances, maintain the plants and keep the services going. According to Obe (2009), without adequate funding, attainment of high standards of education at any level shall tantamount to a mirage. Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) revealed that between 2000 and 2010, allocation to the education sector by Federal Government in Nigeria was not more than 14% of the annual budget, which was very low when compared to the allocation of countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Angola, Sierra Leone, South Africa, all in Sub-Sahara Africa (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

Adetula, Adesina, Owolabi and Ojeka (n.d) stated that in Nigeria, one of the challenges in University education is the skewed nature in the trend of recurrent expenditure in the system. For instance, in 2015 and 2016, the federal government budget for education was N392.4billion and N369.6 billion representing 15.05% and 9.32% respectively of the total budget. This shows the inattentiveness of the government to educational development when juxtaposed with Ghana's 31% allocation of budget to education. This allocation is far below the 26% recommended by the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for developing countries like Nigeria. The under-funding has resulted to frequent and unabated clampdown on schools through strike actions usually embarked upon by teachers/lecturers, scarcity of instructional materials, poor infrastructural facilities thereby making teaching and learning unproductive. It is worrisome that virtually all tertiary

institutions in Nigeria lack basic facilities for teaching and learning such as well-equipped laboratories, residential and lecture halls, security and healthcare for both the students and lecturers.

In order to resuscitate the Nigerian economy, Adetula, Adesina, Owolabi and Ojeka (n.d) stressed that there is an urgent need to aggressively and purposefully fund University education system with a view to boosting the needed human capital capacity. It would be absolutely impossible for Nigeria to realize her dream of being among the top 20 economies in the world by 2020 and beyond if the present position of her University education remains unchanged. This is because the strategic sectors of the Nigerian economy like power, health, education, agriculture, manufacturing and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs competent professionals to survive and upturn the current economic predicaments. This can only be realized if sufficient funds are invested in University education which is the backbone of any economy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of optimizing University education on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at finding:

1. The influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. The influence of University funding on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does University staff training influence sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. How does University funding influence sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria?

### **Statement of the Null Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. University funding does not significantly influence sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The design for the study was ex-post-facto design. This is a systematic inquiry where the researchers do not have direct control over the independent variables because their manifestations have long occurred or they are characteristically not manipulatable (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri, 2004). In this study, the ex-post-facto design was suitable because the manipulation of such variables like training and funding were not feasible in the course of this study. They have already interacted to produce the level of sustainable economic development that the researchers only measured.

The area of study was Cross River State located between Latitude  $5^{\circ}45^1$  and  $5^{\circ}75^1$  North of the Equator and between Longitude  $8^{\circ}30^1$  and  $8^{\circ}50^1$  East of Greenwich Meridian (Wikipedia, 2019). Population of the study was 27,049 lecturers with the Cross River University, Calabar having 6,021 and the University of Calabar, Calabar with 21,028 (Directorates of Academic Planning, Calabar, 2019). Sampling was done in multiple stages using stratified, proportionate and simple random techniques: University of Calabar, Calabar and Cross River University of Technology, Calabar were first stratified into two; proportionate procedure was further used to draw a sample of 614 respondents and 176 respondents from University of Calabar, Calabar and Cross River University of Technology, Calabar respectively while a sample of 790 was randomly selected from the institutions. Yamane (1967) formula was also used to generously draw a sample of 790 respondents from the population. The instrument for the study was Optimizing University Education and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (OUESEDQ) developed in line with a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with weight of 4, 3, 2, and 1 for all positively worded items and weight of 1, 2, 3, and 4 for all negatively worded items respectively. The instrument was duly faced validated by three experts in Educational Test and Measurement of the University of Calabar. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out and the reliability coefficient based on Cronbach Alpha statistic obtained for the sub-scales range from .80 to .91. The data obtained from the field were analyzed using simple linear regression and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at .05 level of significance.

### **Results**

The results for the test of hypotheses are presented hypothesis-by-hypothesis as follows:

**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied with University staff training as independent variable or factor and sustainable economic development as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall influence and Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) test to compare pairs of means as post hoc test. The ANOVA results are presented on Table 1.

**Table 1:** One-way ANOVA of influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Training	N	Mean	Std dev.	Std error	Mini mum	Maxi mum
Induction prog.	240	21.315	5.767	.129	6	38
Study leave	130	21.982	5.542	.084	5	40
Research leave	50	22.065	5.990	.134	5	35
Sabbatical leave	70	20.375	4.684	.234	12	32
Orientation prog.	300	21.350	5.584	.395	10	30
Total	790	21.734	5.857	.441	6	33

  

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F – value	P – value
Between groups	336.431	4	84.108	10.12	.000
Within groups	6520.916	785	8.307	5*	
Total	6857.347	789			

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$

From Table 1, the mean shows that lecturers who went on research leave were the best ( $\bar{X}=22.065$ ) followed by those who went on study leave ( $\bar{X}=21.982$ ) while the least were those that went for sabbatical leave ( $\bar{X}=20.375$ ). The  $\bar{p}$ -value (.000) associated with the computed F-value (10.125) was observed to be less than .05. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To find out which pair of means was responsible for the observed significant results, Fisher’s LSD test was carried out. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** LSD Pairwise comparison of influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Training	Induction prog.	Study leave	Research leave	Sabbat. leave	Orient. Prog.
Induction prog.	15.800**	.667*	.050*	.940*	.035
Study leave	.016	14.875	.083	1.607*	.631
Research leave	.037	.001	14.065	1.690*	.715
Sabbat. leave	.003	.000	.000	14.225	.975*
Orient. Prog.	.934	.125	.090	.048	14.182

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$ , \*\*Values along main diagonal are group means, above it are mean difference (MD) and below it are corresponding P-value

The results on Table 2 shows that the mean (x) of lecturers who had induction programmes were significantly different from those who went for study leave (MD=667,  $P = .016 < .05$ ), those who went for research leave (MD= .050,  $P = .037 < .05$ ) and those who went for sabbatical leave (MD=

.940,  $P = .003 < .05$ ). Those lecturers who went for study leave were significantly different from those who went for sabbatical leave ( $MD = 1.607, P = .000 < .05$ ). Similarly, those who went for research leave were significantly different from those who went for sabbatical leave ( $MD = 1.690, P = .000 < .05$ ) and those who went for sabbatical leave were significantly different from those who had orientation programmes ( $MD = .975, P = .048 < .05$ ).

**Null Hypothesis 2:** University funding does not significantly influence sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, One-way ANOVA was applied with University funding as independent variable or factor and sustainable economic development as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall influence and Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) test to compare pairs of means as post hoc test. The ANOVA results are presented on Table 3.

**Table 3:** One-way ANOVA of influence of University funding on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Teachers years of experience	N	Mean	Std dev.	Std error	Minimum	Maximum
School fee	120	14.547	2.806	.103	5	40
Edu. Trust Fund	220	14.903	2.786	.091	5	38
Endowment fund	80	14.980	2.311	.168	8	33
Subvention	370	14.556	2.525	.130	6	40
Total	790	14.746	2.703	.057	5	40

  

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F – value	P – value
Between groups		3	36.583	4.261*	.014
Within groups	109.570	786	8.585		
Total	6747.776	789			
	6857.346				

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$

From Table 3, the mean of endowment fund was the highest ( $\bar{X} = 14.980$ ), followed by education trust fund ( $\bar{X} = 14.903$ ) while the least was school fee ( $\bar{X} = 14.547$ ). The P-value (.014) associated with the computed F-value (4.261) is less than .05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that funding of universities significantly influenced sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria. To locate the pair of means responsible for the observed significant results, Fisher's LSD test was carried out and the results are shown on Table 4.

**Table 4:** LSD pairwise comparison of influence of University funding on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria

Funding	School fee	Edu Trust Fund	Endow. Fund	Subvention
School fee	14.547**	.356*	.433*	.009
Edu Trust Fund	.009	14.903	.078	.347*
Endow. Fund	.036	.701	14.980	.424
Subvention	.011	.032	.039	14.556

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$ , \*\*Value along main diagonal are group means above it are mean differences (MD) and below it are corresponding P – values

The results on Table 4 showed that school fee was significantly different from Education Trust Fund ( $MD = .356, P = .009 > .05$ ) and Endowment Fund ( $MD = .433, P = .036 > .05$ ). Education Trust Fund was also significantly different from subvention ( $MD = .347, P = .039 > .05$ ), and all the other paired companions were not significant.

### Discussion of Findings



The results of hypothesis one showed that there was significant influence of University staff training on sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria as the p-value (.000) associated with the computed f -value (10.125) is less than .05. This study is in line with Nwadiani (2018) who maintained that the universities' aspiration of invigorating sustainable economic development needs properly trained, skilled work force, knowledgeable and selfless individuals of goodwill and impartial oriented political consciousness in the allocation of national resources such as material and immaterial returns. This can also be achieved as the university adopts and implements a well-planned knowledge-based education that is knowledge driven to produce the required human resources. Uchendu (2011) collaborated that in the educational organization, it is considered necessary as programmes for teachers' continuous updating of their knowledge, skills, ideas, abilities, competencies to meet the new challenges in these fast-growing changes in the society.

The results of hypothesis two revealed that University funding significantly influence sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria as the p-value (.014) associated with the computed f -value (4.125) is less than .05. This study aligned with Adetula, Adesina, Owolabi and Ojeka (n.d) who stressed that there is an urgent need to aggressively and purposefully fund university education system with a view to generating the needed human capital capacity. It would be absolutely impossible for Nigeria to realize her dream of being among the top 20 economies in the world by 2020 and beyond if the present position of her university education remains unchanged. The strategic sectors of the Nigerian economy like power, health, education, agriculture, manufacturing and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs competent professionals to survive and upturn the current economic predicaments. This can only be realized if sufficient funds are invested in the university education which is the backbone of any economy. Obe (2009) also stated that without adequate funding, standards of education at any level shall tantamount to a mirage, as we will be merely building castles in the air.

### Conclusion

It is evident from the study that sustainable economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria can be enhanced if the University education is optimized by both the Federal and the State Governments through its adequate training of personnel and funding.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. University staff training be made a priority by both the Federal and the State governments in order to optimize its potentials for sustainable economic development in Cross River State of Nigeria.
2. University education should be adequately funded by both the Federal and the State governments in order to enhance sustainable economic development in Cross River State of Nigeria.

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