ACCESSIBILITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND (TETFUND) FOR RESEARCH IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIAN INSTITUTIONS

By

NNANNA ONUIGBO
Department of Educational Management
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

&

KAEGON, ELIZABETH LESI SAAONEE
Department of Educational Management,
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the accessibility of TETFund for research in institutions in South East Nigeria State. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprises of all the staff of TETFund in the zone and Abuja Head Office, all the lecturers of the institutions in South East, Nigeria (7,734). Based on sampling criteria, eight hundred and twenty-four (824) respondents (773 lecturers and 51 TETFund officials) were randomly sampled which constitute 10 percent of the lecturers from each of the five federal universities and all the TETFund officers from Abuja and all the desk officers of the five universities. The instrument was the researcher's designed questionnaire on "TETFund Inputs for Beneficiaries Research Output Questionnaire" (TIBROQ). Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and a co-efficient of .912, .833 and .874 respectively was obtained. Descriptive statistical tools of mean and standard deviation provided answers to the research questions while z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Findings revealed that the problems militating against research is poor funding, low quality of research output due the inaccessibility of lecturers to the provided TETFund fund and that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on TETFund inputs into research and factors militating against researchers' access to research funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that TETFund should increase the funds allocated to universities and TETFund should revisit and review the guidelines for accessing TETFund funds.

Keywords: Accessibility, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Research in Institutions

Introduction

The culture of research over the years has been dwindling in most of the higher institutions in the country. The outcome of which would be the revival of quality research among not only lecturers in Tertiary Institutions but also students of such Institutions (TETFund, 2016). TETFund is an intervention agency created to manage the disbursement of the 2% (two percent) education tax accruing from all companies registered and doing business in Nigeria. Prior to the establishment of TETFund after the amendment of an Act in 2011, the atmosphere in tertiary institutions was that of general unrest, mostly occasioned by incessant strikes especially by members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non Academic Staff Union (NASU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), among other sister unions within the system. According to Oduwaiye, Owolabi, Onasanya and Shehu (2010), some of the challenges include funding, accountability, ethics, quality and their own attitude to research. Involvement in research brings the academics face to face with the challenges research dissemination, utilization and commercialization.

Since inception in 2011, TETFund has been disbursing the 2% companies' funds in the areas of facility development, academic research, library upgrade, publication of academic journals and training of academicians both locally and internationally but accessing of these funds by the institution has been another serious problem. Fatunde (2007) states that without proper funding from government, university–based researchers and scientists cannot undertake meaningful research and without research, the country cannot make substantial economic and industrial progress. According to Tafida, Kasim and Chima (2015) when education is not sufficiently funded, the nitty-gritty of such education will be weak; accordingly the products of such educational system will be generally weak academically. Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007)opine that funds allocated to higher education should not be considered as mere expense, but as a long –term investment of immense benefit to the society as a whole

Research, which is a systematic search and investigation for increasing knowledge or its extended version, Research and Development (R&D), occupies the main centre stage in the activities of western universities. Bogoro (2015) stated that the paucity of research has made Nigerian tertiary institutions not to be rated in the global chart. Mahmood (2011) opine that in Nigeria, basically due to the declining quality of our research infrastructure, i.e. the absence of modern scientific laboratories where cutting edge research can be conducted, declining quality of the academia, the lack of incentive for publications and dearth of funding, research activities have been at a very low level in many of our tertiary institutions.

Research has contributed to the rise and expansion of the world knowledge economy and the establishment of imperial hegemony of a few countries over the rest of the world in the on-going process of globalization and its uneven development. This is the reason, the main criteria for measuring world class universities is not so much on the volume of teaching, student population or community services a university could muster, but research output measured by the breakthrough findings published in first class and medal winning journals and books which could increase the volume and rate of knowledge accumulation. No wonder the advanced countries with their capitalist accumulation are on top of the world. According to Aniedi and Effiom (2011), and Abbort and Poncouliages (2004), research plays a critical role in promoting the prosperity of a nation and the well-being of its citizens. They state that universities through research make important contributions to the growth and development of industries and government businesses thereby promoting national and global development.

This is because Research and Development has become the most enduring and effective means of boosting sustainable economic development and re-enforcing competitiveness in the face of rapid growth taking place between industries, countries and peoples in the world. Therefore, research should be elevated to a position of higher strategic importance within the tertiary institutions. Research universities according to University World News (2013) are institutions committed to the creation and dissemination of knowledge, in a range of disciplines, fields and featuring the appropriate laboratories, libraries and other infrastructures that permit teaching and research at the highest possible level. The only way to pursue knowledge is through research. Nigerian researchers have continued to depend on traditional ways of doing research due to lack of funding and this dependency has contributed to the low level of research output in Nigeria. According to Okebukola (2004), what determine the quality of a university are the special services it renders for its immediate community which is derived from the research it conducts.

TETFund realizes the need to develop research facilities in tertiary institutions and substantial effort is being put into this. The National Research fund of N3b was introduced as a complement to address the paucity of funds to conduct tertiary education research activities. These funds are central and competitive. The funds are expected to facilitate research at cutting –edge level on activities that will impact positively on the competitiveness of the country on the global milieu and build up the research capacity of Nigerian researchers to contribute to the national development efforts as well as tackle global challenges.

Research and development in Nigeria is faced by a lot of challenges which include poor research facilities, inadequate human resources, poor linkages with the production system, lack of funds, poor policies, lack of implementation and lack of motivation. There is a yawning gap between universities and the quantum of research expected from them. Only a limited amount of university research reaches a commercial state. Research in universities is mainly conceived in terms of publications and career development and this have little societal relevance. Okigbo (1985) in Oyodele (2010) found that basic and applied researches of Nigerian universities operate between 6% and 24% of national research capacity. These findings indicated that Nigerian universities perform below average if they are to contribute to national development.

Funds were released for the execution of projects such as classrooms, lecture, theatres, hostels and sundry facilities in various tertiary institutions across the country, as part of the measures to arrest the deteriorating learning environment in tertiary institutions. But before an institution can access the fund, there are various requirements for different demands before an institution can access the fund. Access to research funds implies making it possible for every lecturer who is entitled to research to receive it. Taiyeob and Atenda (2005) explain that access implies right, opportunity or means of reaching. It is the opportunity to get research fund.

Adamu (2014) reports that TETFund executive secretary Bogoro states that one of the challenges facing TETFund funding programme was the inability of some tertiary institutions to access over N67 billion of the funds earmarked to boost their teaching – learning infrastructure. Severally, schools have complained that the process of accessing funds from TETFund has been largely cumbersome and accounts for the sloppy pace with which approvals are given (Eno-Abasi, 2015).

The timely interventions of TETFund to promote research which will lead to the development of the country do not seem to have yielded the desired results as in other areas. TETFund states of the inability of beneficiary institutions to access the funds allocated to them. Furthermore, over 70 percent of these allocated funds are still un-accessed. In the same vein, Eno-Abasi (2015), opines that in terms of constraints associated with the access to intervention funds, TETFund cannot take all the blame. The managers of our institutions also have to share in it. Ajayi (2014) states that many institutions are still finding it difficult to fully comprehend the requirements for accessing TETFund intervention funds. This has resulted to frequent mistakes and non approval by TETFund and delays in accessing intervention funds. Bogoro (2015) opines that the challenges facing the schools are not only limited to academic staff, politics has also crept in. Politics has influenced development of the University. Maduawa (2005) wrote on Alternative Sources of Funding Public Education: A Case of Education Tax Fund in Enugu State, No author has written to find out the reason for un-accessed funds. Therefore it is against this background that the paper conceived the idea to investigate the accessibility of TETFund to' research output in the tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Delay in accessing fund provided by TETFund had lead to low turnout and quality of research in institutions in Nigeria. TETFund has taken measures to arrest these challenges by allocating and disbursing huge sums of money to all the Universities in Nigeria, although the effect is still minimal. TETFund has said that funds made available for research have not been accessed and utilized. Therefore, the question is: How are these funds provided by TETFund accessed by the beneficiaries' Universities in South East, Nigeria? This is the fulcrum of this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the accessibility of TETFund to' research output in the tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. The study specifically sought to achieve these objectives:
  i. Find out the extent of universities' access to research funds.
  ii. Determine the beneficiaries' research output in Universities.

iii.   Identify the factors militating against institutions' access to disbursed funds for research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the extent of universities' access to research fund in South East, Nigeria?
2. What is the beneficiaries' research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria?
3. What are the factors militating against researchers access to research funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

i.   There is no significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the extent of Universities access to research Funds in South East, Nigeria.
ii. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the beneficiaries research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria.
iii. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of TETFund officials and lecturers on factors militating against researchers' access to research funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria.

Methods

Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey design The sample of 824 respondent comprising 51 TETFund Officers and 724 lecturers from 5 Universities in South East Nigeria Simple random sampling technique was applied in the selection of 10 percent of the lecturers from each of the five federal universities. All the TETFund officers from Abuja and the desk officers of the five universities were used (purposive sampling). A 38 items questionnaire titled "TETFund Inputs for Beneficiaries Research Output Questionnaire" (TIBROQ). Was design for data collection for this study. The respondents were asked rate each of the items on 4 point likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA – 4points), Agree (A – 3points), Disagree (D – 2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD – 1point). The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Educational Management and measurement and evaluation in the beneficiary institutions in South East Nigeria while the author administered the questionnaire items to 5 TETFund officials and 15 lecturers outside the sample. The response from the test yielded Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient of.745,.861,.891,.912, .833 and .874 respectively. The data generated were organized on tables. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. While z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The data and results of each research question and it corresponding hypothesis was presented on different tables.

Research Question One: What is the extent of lecturers' access to research funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 4.1: Extent of Universities' access to research fund in South East, Nigeria

S/N	Items Extent of Lecturers Access Variables	TETFund Officials Response (N = 51)				$\bar{x}$	SD	Lecturers Response (N = 749)				$\bar{x}$
		SA	A	D	SD			SA	A	D	SD	
21.	The lecturers' access was very low.	19	20	7	5	3.04	0.96	326	339	66	18	3.30
22.	Lecturers find it difficult to access TETFund funds for research.	14	21	7	9	2.78	1.05	337	319	68	25	3.29

23.	Lecturers access TETFund funds easily.	11	9	21	10	2.41	1.04	31	40	323	355	1.66
24.	Many lectures have benefited from TETFund funds.	15	14	13	9	2.69	1.09	89	151	209	300	2.04
25.	The lecturers' access to TETFund funds is high.	8	11	15	17	2.20	1.08	66	78	301	304	1.87
				Grand mean		**2.62**	**1.08**			**Grand mean**		**2.43**

The result in Table 4.1 indicates that the lecturers' access to TETFund funds was very low. Lecturers find it difficult to access TETFund funds for research and many lectures have benefited from TETFund funds with mean of 3.04, 2.78 and 2.69 for TETFund officials. The lecturers find it difficult to access TETFund funds for research and do not benefit from it as their mean scores 3.29 and 2.04 recorded. The aggregate mean score of 2.53 showed low extent of lecturers' access to research fund in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the Beneficiaries Research Output in Universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 4.2: **Beneficiaries Research Output in Universities in South East, Nigeria**

S/N	Items Beneficiaries Research Output Variable	TETFund Officials Response (N = 51)				$\bar{x}$	SD	Lecturers Response (N = 749)				$\bar{x}$	SD
		SA	A	D	SD			SA	A	D	SD		
26	Most of the research output was found in publications.	21	19	4	7	3.06	1.03	290	375	67	17	3.25	0.71
27	Research output was communicated in the form of journal articles, books and technical reports.	25	21	5	0	3.39	0.67	342	310	83	14	3.31	0.74
28	Most of the research works are rejected for lack of relevance.	7	14	17	13	2.29	1.01	328	315	79	27	3.26	0.79
29	Many research works are not in line with Nigerian economy, society and polity.	12	9	17	13	2.39	1.11	210	106	339	94	2.58	1.03
30	Nigeria's scores on research and Development are rather discouraging.	15	11	17	8	2.65	1.07	106	170	240	233	2.20	1.03
31	Universities emphasized teaching to the detriment of research.	19	21	6	5	3.06	0.95	280	337	90	42	3.14	0.84
				Grand mean		2.81	1.05			**Grand mean**		2.96	0.96

The result in Table 4.2 reveals that most of the research output was found in publications; research output was communicated in the form of journal articles, books and technical reports and most of the research works are rejected for lack of relevance as recorded by TETFund officials with a mean score of 3.06, 3.39 and 2.29. Likewise, the lecturers agreed on most of the items stated except item 5, that Nigeria's scores on research and development are rather discouraging. The grand mean of 2.88 shows moderate extent of beneficiaries research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What are the Factors Militating against Researchers Access to Research Funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria?

Table 4.3: **Factors Militating against Researchers Access to Research Funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria**

S/N	Items Factors Variable	TETFund Officials Response (N = 51)				$\bar{x}$	SD	Lecturers Response (N = 749)				$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}\bar{x}/2$
		SA	A	D	SD			SA	A	D	SD			
32.	TETFund guidelines are difficult to fulfill.	6	9	26	10	2.22	0.90	339	325	66	19	3.31	0.74	2.76
33.	Politics at the level of submission at the institutions hinder access to funds.	32	19	0	0	3.63	0.49	337	318	69	25	3.29	0.77	3.46
34.	Over centralization of TETFund delays access to the funds.	16	21	9	5	2.94	0.95	314	335	59	41	3.23	0.82	3.09
35.	Lectures are comfortable with TETFund guidelines.	12	16	11	12	2.55	1.10	45	79	346	279	1.85	0.84	2.20
36.	Lack of accountability.	14	11	17	9	2.59	1.08	342	310	83	14	3.31	0.7	2.95
37.	Improper Documentation	7	9	25	10	2.25	0.93	336	323	66	24	3.30	0.7	2.78
38.	Lack of adequate Planning	14	21	5	11	2.75	1.09	375	290	67	17	3.37	0.7	3.06
				Grand mean		2.70	1.05			Grand mean		3.09	0.9	2.90

Table 4.3 shows that the TETFund officials disagreed that TETFund guidelines are difficult to fulfill ($\bar{x} = 2.22$) and politics at the level of submission at the institutions hinder access to funds ($\bar{x} = 3.63$). On the contrary, the lecturers are not comfortable with TETFund guidelines ($\bar{x} = 1.85$). Consequently, attributing most of the Factors Militating against Researchers Access to Research Funds as follows: Politics at the level of submission at the institutions hinder access to funds; over centralization of TETFund delays access to the funds; lack of accountability; improper documentation and lack of adequate planning.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of access to research funds in universities in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.4: z-test analysis on difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of access to research funds in universities in universities in South East, Nigeria

	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	Z-cal	Zcrit	Level of Sig.	Decision
Level Of Access	TETFUND Officials	51	2.62	1.08	798	1.184	1.960	0.05	**Ho₄** Accepted
	Lecturers	749	2.43	1.11					

Table 4.4 indicates that the mean score (2.62) of TETFund officials were higher than the lecturers which was $\bar{x} = 2.43$. The calculated z-value (1.184) for group is less than z-critical (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance, so null hypothesis four is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of access to research funds in universities in South East, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of beneficiaries' research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.5: z-test analysis on difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of beneficiaries' research outputin Universities

	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	Z-cal	Zcrit	Level of Sig.	Decision
Beneficiaries' Research Output	Tetfund Officials	51	2.81	1.06	798	-1.064	±1.960	0.05	Ho5 Accepted
	Lecturers	749	2.96	0.96					

Result in Table 4.5 reveals that the mean score of TETFund officials and lecturers are 2.81 and 2.96. And that the standard deviations of their scores are 1.06 and 0.96 respectively. However, when this means difference was subjected to an independent z-test statistics, it was observed that the calculated z-value is less than z-critical at 0.05 level of significance, so null hypothesis five is accepted. Hence there is no significant difference between mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the level of beneficiaries' research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant difference between mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on factors militating against researchers' access to research funds in Universities in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.6: z-test analysis on difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on the factors militating against researchers access to research funds in Universities

	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	Z-cal	Zcrit	Level of Sig.	Decision
Factors Militating	Tetfund Officials	51	2.70	1.05	798	-2.896	±1.960	0.05	Ho6 Rejected
	Lecturers	749	3.09	0.92					

Table 4.6 revealed that the mean score of TETFund officials (2.70) were less than the lecturers which was $\bar{x}$ = 3.09. The calculated z-value for group (-2.896) is greater than z-critical at 0.05 level of significance, so null hypothesis six is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of TETFund officials and lecturers on factors militating against researchers access to research funds in South East, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study shows that lecturers access to research fund was very low, lecturers find it difficult to access TETfund funds for research and do not benefit from it. TETFund had complained that funds allocated to universities for research are un-accessed. This agrees with Falome (2014) who opines that the Minister of Education, Shekarau states that out of the allocation of over N10.05 billion to universities, polytechnics and colleges of Education for research by the Federal Government and disbursed by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), over N7.8 billion is yet to be accessed. He further stated that over 70 percent of these allocated funds are still un-accessed. However, some Nigerian academics have taken cue and started engaging in serious research work. The findings is akin to Adamu (2014) who reports that TETFund executive secretary Bogoro states that one of the challenges facing TETFund funding programme was the inability of some tertiary institutions to access over N67 billion of the funds earmarked to boost their teaching – learning infrastructure. The same thing applies to institution-based research.

This is in tandem with Eno-Abasi (2015) who states that severally, schools have complained that the process of accessing funds from TETFund has been largely cumbersome and accounts for the sloppy pace with which approvals are given. Continuing, Eno-Abasi further stated that the only thing that people seem to have about TETFund is that sometimes the procedures to access funds are so long and cumbersome and many institutions have backlogs of deals that are not cleared

The finding shows moderate level for beneficiaries research output in Universities in South East, Nigeria. Research output is measured by the extent to which lecturers engage in their own research and at the same time publish their articles in referred journals, conference papers, books, book chapters among others. This is in line with Uzin (2002) who posits a sharp decline in the research productivity of academics in terms of the number of articles published in Nigeria from 1980 to 1999 in an analysis of 21 cores Nigerian List journals, indexed in the Social Science Citation Index database.

This finding agrees with Middaugh (2001) that such output productivity measures look at publications that are submitted, accepted (in press) or published. The published works could be journal articles (referred and non-referred), books (including edited books and textbooks), book chapters, monographs, conference papers and research proposals written to receive external and internal grants.

The findings reveals that the factors militating against researchers' access to research funds are as follows: politics at the level of submission at the institutions hinder access to funds; over centralization of TETFund delays access to the funds; lack of accountability; improper documentation and lack of adequate planning. It is in agreement with Sani (2014) that more than three years down the line, many of the tertiary institutions have been complaining about their inability to have access to funds from TETFund. This was confirmed by TETFund Executive Secretary. This is in line with Sani (2014) who opines that Bogoro identified improper documentation and problems associated with financial reports as some of the major factors limiting the access of tertiary institution to the funds.

This finding supports Sani (2014) who asserts that lack of planning is another factor militating access to TETFund funds. Due to lack of adequate planning on what to research for, inadequate planning leads to delays in the implementation of the project or completion of the research work. Furthermore, attitude of staff to research hampers access to TETFund funds. The attitude of the staff to research is not encouraging. Many of them lack the ability to write good research proposals. TETFund approved intervention fund for research and manuscripts development, the fund has continued to accumulate and un-accessed for many years. Inadequate comprehension of the requirements for accessing intervention funds is another factor. This is in line with Ajayi (2014) that many institutions are still finding it difficult to fully comprehend the requirements for accessing TETFund intervention funds. This has resulted to frequent mistakes and non approval by TETFund and delays in accessing intervention funds. TETFundis always of the opinion that the problem usually sterns from the benefitting institution.

Political factors militate against universities in accessing the funds. This is in line with Bogoro (2015) who opines that the challenges facing the schools are not only limited to academic staff, politics has also crept in. Politics has influenced development of the University. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has been quite worried about the condition of the universities and even threatened that it would withhold its recognition of the university if the management refuses to settle the political scores affecting the smooth running of the schools. However, the political interference is really affecting the management in accessing TETFund intervention funds, and TETFund is not comfortable if the report is political bickering rather than academic advancement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, lecturers find it difficult to access TETFund funds for research and do not benefit from it. This is due to politics at the level of submission at the institutions which have consequently hinder the access to these funds and over centralization of TETFund delays access to the funds, lack of accountability, improper documentation and lack of adequate planning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:
  i.   TETFund should stop the politics at the institutional level and give equal access to lecturers.
  ii.   Lecturers and institutions should abide by the rules of TETFund.

iii.   TETFund should revisit and review the guidelines for accessing TETFund funds.

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