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Adoption and sustainability of donor-funded higher education buildings in Nigeria: A review of impact of its influencing factors

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Abstract

There has been a general increase in the decadence and lack of facilities and infrastructure required to meet the needs of students and lecturers in the higher education system, prompting stakeholders and individuals to fund and donate building infrastructure to counter the government's low funding of the system. This review investigates the impact of factors influencing the adoption of donor-funded buildings in the Nigerian higher education system, with the goal of evaluating education funding over the last 25 years and proposing a better mechanism for scaling up infrastructure provision in the Nigerian higher education system. The paper used a comprehensive search of scholarly sources to identify 65 publications that were reviewed by title, abstract, and full text to resolve similarities, out of which 44 publications met the criteria, and were screened using inclusion and exclusion criteria, and analyzed using thematic synthesis. It was found that five major influencing factors impacting donor-funded building adoption in the Nigerian higher education system are government policy and regulatory environment. This study also discovered that the adoption and sustainability of donor-funded building projects are dependent on these influencing factors. The study indicated that the Nigerian government underfunds educational infrastructure in higher education, and that the adoption of donor-funded projects is low due to its reliance on significant influencing factors. As a result, higher education institutions and associated authorities should strengthen planning and accountability, processes, managerial and technical capability, and provide clear maintenance frameworks to facilitate adoption.

Keywords: Adoption, Building, Donor-funded, Higher Education, Sustainability.

Introduction

Education has been defined as a process of imparting vital knowledge for directing and assisting human beings toward a more self-satisfying and desirable existence, as well as for the betterment of society (Taneja, 2005). Researches have shown that education is paramount tool for effective living and development of an individual, and an educational institution is any institution that provides education, from primary schools to secondary schools and on to tertiary institutions such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, and those that offer correspondence courses (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2019; Ibe-Moses *et al.*, 2021; Ajibola, 2025). These definitions implies that education is an indispensable tool to human existence especially in higher education and its importance to national growth cannot be overstated. This justify the fact that higher education's role is crucial to the development of higher-level skills and capabilities, which are critical for national growth, especially in the context of globalization and the move to knowledge economies (Nwachukwu, 2014). As a result, countries all over the world, including Nigeria, are focusing their policies on higher education. Higher education encompasses all sorts of post-secondary study, training, or research training provided by universities or other educational institutions that have been designated as institutes of higher education by competent governmental authorities (UNESCO, 2003). Johnstone (2006) opined that higher education should contribute to the development of the entire education system through teacher education, curriculum development, and educational research, thereby providing the critical mass skills and educated populace that any country needs to ensure genuine endogenous sustainable development.

Sarker *et al.* (2010) opined that the rise in the number of people seeking education, as well as the pressure to provide quality education in the face of ever-tighter budgets, has posed a serious challenge to the government in fulfilling the mandate of providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities in the educational arena. The study stated further that this has posed a serious challenge to the government in fulfilling its mandate especially in the area of infrastructural facilities. These in the educational system create a positive impact learning assimilation and

increase the attendance of students in the system and also enhance the motivations of teachers coupled with the increase in the academic performance of students (Alimi, 2004), this shows that there exists a positive correlation between school or institution architecture and its users because a well-planned academic environment will enhance good academic performance of students such facilities and infrastructures include; adequate classrooms, toilets, hostels, laboratories, good road etc. The ability of government to bring these provisions into reality prove futile. Hence, Asiyai (2015) affirmed that higher institutions in the countries have been seeking the support of their various Alumni, government parastatals and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing these infrastructures through donor-funded building projects, thereby improving institutions' architecture and academic achievements.

Isiaka *et al.* (2020) opined that the challenges of tertiary education in Nigeria include poor structure, inadequate library and laboratory equipment, poor infrastructural facilities, poor innovative and creative approach to learning, poor scientific and technological literacy, inefficient allocation of the meagre resources available to the sector have so far mere the positive output of the sector. It is important for institutions to seek alternate means of providing appropriate materials and infrastructure in order to accomplish the desired outcome through donor-funded educational programs.

Kiara and Luketero (2018) refer to donor funding as an official development assistant, mainly administered with the objective of promoting sustainable social and economic development and welfare of recipient country. In addition, it was defined as development projects carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with goals that focus on changing lives through empowerment and social justice (Ouma & Kamaara, 2018). This demonstrates that donor-funded initiatives have the potential to effect developmental changes. Scholars have conducted various studies on the effects of government funding on education in Nigeria (Amadi & Nwogu, 2023; Muhammed-Angulu *et al.*, 2024), and the investigations revealed that the funding has a significant positive effect on education, despite the fact that the government's low funding rate has resulted in low system productivity. Busa *et al.* (2025) also examined the influence of government and donor funds on girls' enrolment and retention in public secondary schools; the study's findings revealed a favourable impact on girls' enrolling but a retention difficulty. This research clearly demonstrated that educational funding is vital and influential.

Also, Donor funding methods have continued to support poor communities in many parts of the world by providing services in important areas such as health care, shelter, supporting income generating activities, education, and environmental care, among others (Kuria & Wanyoike, 2016; Ngugi, 2022; Ilesanmi *et al.*, 2022; Mwinyigogo, 2025; Ototo, 2025; Afande, 2025). However, studies are yet to be conducted in Nigeria on factors influencing the funding from individuals or corporate donors for higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to review the impact of factors influencing donor-funded higher education buildings by evaluating education funding in Nigeria, assessing donor-funded educational buildings in Nigeria, and investigating the factors influencing these donor-funded buildings within the higher education system, which will aid in determining the impact of these factors.

Review of literature

Education Funding in Nigeria

Educational funding is referred to as the amount of money allocated to the advancement of education (Ijaiya & Lawal, 2004). Omagu, (2016) in his research stated that Nigeria education is considered as a public enterprise that is funded solely by government. The Nigeria government sources of revenue are through federal taxes and duties on petroleum, profits from imports and exports and the centrally collected value added tax (VAT) (Ijaiya & Lawal, 2004). This revenue is not enough to cater for education and other competing sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, transportation etc, and this have result to the lack of proper educational financing. Omofonmwan and Odia (2009), stated that the Nigeria's fiscal allocation to the educational sector is less than the UNESCO-recommended 26%. Insufficient funding has been a long-term cancer that has ravaged the educational sector. According to Odiba, (2021), since independence, education has been hampered by insufficient finance. Essentially, current educational funding is insufficient to support the kind of increase that the educational sector requires. More also, Odiba, (2021) stated that poor funding has grossly resulted in:

- a) Having a large number of undereducated school instructors and graduates in a variety of fields.
- b) Most tertiary lecturers believe that there is nothing more dignifying and fulfilling than money. The ivory tower's dignity and envy have been thrown to the dogs. In the country's tertiary education programs, sophisticated examination malpractice is common.

- c) Deteriorating buildings, obsolete equipment, battered classroom floors, fractured walls, leaking roofs, and windows with wire gauze instead of glass.

One of the challenges facing education in Nigeria is the death of infrastructure due to poor/inadequate funding. Ochuba, (2001) observes that all of the resources needed to produce education are in low supply; lecture rooms, laboratories, student hostels, library space, books and journals, and office space are all severely lacking. Underfunding of education, particularly at the tertiary level, has become a recurring phenomena in the politics, as practically everyone seems to agree that, in light of the enormous decadence in the education sector, money allocated to the sector cannot meet sectoral and sub-sectoral needs (Ezekwesili, 2006)'.

As a result, these studies demonstrate that government funding for education is entirely focused on revenue, with the education system's quota being extremely low and failing to meet UNESCO recommendation. This has had an influence on the government's provision of critical educational amenities, particularly infrastructure in higher education institutions. Individual and stakeholder funding and donations are required in this situation to assist the government in meeting educational needs.

Donor-Funded Educational Buildings in Nigeria

There has been a general increase in the decadence and lack of facilities and infrastructure needed to meet the needs of students in the higher education system (Ignatius & Umotong, 2022), particularly in public institutions of learning where performance has been impacted. This has led to a decline in many people's interests in education because the construction of basic facilities and infrastructure will encourage participation in academic activities, improve the quality of education, and improve students' overall performance (Ouma, 2011). Meanwhile, Tertiary education funding in Nigeria has a long history dating back to the foundation of academic institutions. The education system of higher institution of learning has grown significantly in terms of population expansion over the previous three decades, as a result of increased enrolment and the development of new institutions (Famade et al., 2015). However, since then, and till now, there has been a lack of funding for higher education as there has been low funding in this area, which has been a source of contention among stakeholders due to its impact on the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria (Famurewa, 2014) coupled with the fact that the rate of enrolment of students in higher institution of learning is on the increase.

Donor funds are official development assistance specifically created for developing countries, and they are intended to augment internally generated resources that are generally insufficient to fully meet most developing countries' massive capital investment demands (Mumin *et al.*, 2021). Donation of such can be in form of advances (repayable with or without premium) or awards (non-repayable) and comes from financial foundations such as local; the East African Development Bank (EADB), continental; the African Development Bank (ADB), and global; the World Bank (Yindenaba Abor, 2023). Donor funds are essential to the delivery of social assistance and the growth of developing countries as stated in the research of Gachui (2017) that donor funding allows infrastructure to be built, production to be improved, health care and education to be provided, and economic, political, and social processes to be facilitated. And due to the high levels of poverty in developing nations, higher educational institutions have resulted in seeking for donors (Maruta *et al.*, 2020).

Projects financed by donors play a critical role in development of most countries. They have tirelessly supported the Country's underprivileged for decades, offering better health care, water and sanitation, shelter, education, environmental protection, and income-generating activities, among other thing (Gilbert, 2021). More also, Donors have put money into development projects on a global, national, regional, and local level, yet the majority of them have failed to meet their goals and objectives. Most funders have previously provided grants, but are now transitioning to result-based funding in order to achieve and assure that the project's aim is fully realized (Kiara & Luketero, 2018).

According to the findings of these studies, the level of decadence in higher education infrastructure has negatively impacted academic performance despite increased enrolment, with funding remaining a major concern. This circumstance has necessitated the solicitation of donor funds from stakeholders, as it is largely unique to developing countries, with the help being informed of development aid to argument inadequate developmental funding for institutions. This has been stated to increase infrastructure provision; nevertheless, efforts to achieve the specified funding objective have failed to meet donor expectations, which is most likely due to influencing factors from both the donor and the institution receiving the funding project.

Factors Influencing Donor-Funded Higher Educational Buildings in Nigeria

The decline in the quality of education in Nigeria today calls for the intervention of wealthy individuals or organizations to uphold the standard of education by providing facilities such as building structures, among other things, in order to achieve the sustainable development goal on education, considering the government's financial constraints. However, in the Nigerian context, this is determined by various factors not limited to these major five;

- a. ***Government policy and regulatory environment:*** Donors prefer to invest in locations with predictable approval processes, secure land acquisition, and well-defined educational goals (Marks, 2014). In Nigeria, the effectiveness of cooperation between federal, state, and local entities is often crucial to project completion. Projects may be delayed, amended, or abandoned when legal frameworks are insufficient, subnational competence is limited, or governmental institutions do not work together (Shah, 2004). Research on externally sponsored programs in Nigeria shows that strong coordination structures, policy backing, and alignment with government processes are essential for long-term institutionalization and successful implementation (Atta et al., 2024). This suggests that a stable regulatory environment is an important factor in donor trust in school-building initiatives.
- b. ***Community participation and local ownership:*** Donor-funded educational buildings have a better chance of success when the host community is involved from the start and sees the project as their own. Members of the community can provide land, monitor contractors, prevent vandalism, and promote school use after it is built. According to studies on participatory program design in Nigeria, co-creation with community, facility, and government actors' aids in determining local objectives and encouraging long-term ownership (Atta et al., 2024). Similarly, research on donor-supported innovation in low-income settings emphasizes the significance of national ownership, coherence, and harmonization for externally sponsored programs to survive beyond the initial funding cycle (Spicer et al., 2018). When communities are excluded, learning facilities may see poor use, neglect, or resistance.
- c. ***Donor priorities and funding conditions:*** Donors support projects that are aligned with their strategic objectives, such as girls' education, inclusive education, rural access, emergency education, or sustainable development goals, rather than sponsoring educational buildings just for infrastructure purposes (Tursunov, 2022). The needs for reporting, monitoring, timelines, procurement, and quantifiable results all have an impact on the scope and design of the building project. Evidence from donor-supported projects in Nigeria and other countries shows that when externally funded interventions are designed to meet donor expectations, supported by evidence, and endorsed by important policy actors, they are more likely to gain support and grow (Spicer et al., 2018; Shiffman et al., 2018). As a result, the form, location, and characteristics of an educational facility typically reflect both local need and the donor's willingness and readiness to finance it.
- d. ***Infrastructure and construction cost conditions:*** The cost of creating schools in Nigeria is heavily influenced by material availability, transportation access, skilled labour, water, power, and other site services. Poor roads and inadequate logistics can significantly increase costs and impede delivery in remote or difficult-to-access locations (Usman & Ibrahim, 2015). Research on donor-funded initiatives in Africa also finds that considerable financial or in-kind contributions from regional groups are commonly required for projects to succeed, implying that the true cost of implementation is usually higher than the grant alone (Fonn et al., 2020). In general, funding research from Nigeria demonstrates how inadequate financing environments, inflationary pressures, and structural economic hurdles can impede project execution (Isah et al., 2023). This means that, even when donor-sponsored educational facilities receive funds, actual construction results are largely determined by local infrastructure and pricing stability.
- e. ***Security and political stability:*** Donors may be cautious to fund permanent educational infrastructure in areas of Nigeria affected by political turmoil, banditry, insurgency, or communal violence due to the risk of destruction, displacement, or halting implementation. Contractors', insurance, transportation, and monitoring costs may all rise as a result of security concerns. According to research conducted in Nigeria, contextual factors such as insecurity can directly affect program delivery and reduce the efficacy of otherwise well-designed interventions (Arogundade et al., 2019). Regional inequality and instability also have an impact on the long-term viability of social investments, influencing the concentration or avoidance of initiatives (Adedini et al., 2025). Donors are thus more likely to invest in school buildings if the surrounding environment is secure enough to ensure that development can be completed and the facility can continue to be used in the future with value maintenance.

Summarily, influencing factors as deduced from literature such as robust regulatory framework and community

involvement are critical factors influencing a donor's willingness to contribute to educational requirements, as well as the project's ability to satisfy his personal goals for the institutions. Furthermore, the success of donor-funded initiatives is based on a safe environment, stable prices, and a suitable location. This suggests that before contributing funds to meet higher education infrastructure demands, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, building project financiers should check that these conditions are met. As a result, aligning donor preferences to educational infrastructure requirements is crucial for educational achievement.

Impacts of Factors Influencing Donor-Funded Higher Educational Buildings in Nigeria

Donor-funded higher educational facilities in Nigeria perform best when these adoption-influencing factors are beneficial. When public policy is favourable, donor intentions align with governmental or institutional processes, and local communities are involved from the planning phase, higher institutions' infrastructure is more likely to progress beyond simple construction and into long-term instructional use. Practically, this improves lecture room accessibility, reduces traffic, strengthens the learning environment, and raises the confidence of underprivileged groups in education. According to studies, long-term acceptance of externally sponsored initiatives is heavily reliant on designing for scale, collecting meaningful data, navigating country ownership, and linking projects with current institutional structures rather than viewing them as stand-alone donor projects (Spicer *et al.*, 2018). The importance of local involvement is also clear because community-based interventions in Nigeria show that when beneficiaries understand, support, and internalize a project, their self-efficacy and engagement increase. This explains why educational structures are better conserved, maintained, and used when communities consider them their own (Nwaba *et al.*, 2022). Targeted external support can also have spillover effects for homes and communities, as proven by school-related initiatives in northeastern Nigeria that improve local welfare and solidify the educational environment around the school (Barnabas *et al.*, 2023).

However, when adoption conditions are poor, the impact of donor-supported higher educational frameworks is limited. The building may be physically built, but it will not provide long-term educational value if policy coordination is weak, subnational institutions lack implementation capacity, or donor support is not appropriately passed to local ownership. Donor transition studies show that when external support runs out without continuity planning, service delivery and institutional functioning suffer, putting sustainability at risk (Ssegujja *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, insecurity and war can significantly reduce the benefits of educational infrastructure by impeding development, causing facility damage, deterring educator deployment, and undermining the larger educational system required to make the building functioning (Koubar *et al.*, 2022).

Research methodology

The study employed systematic review method to explore the impact of factors affecting the adoption of donor funded higher educational buildings in Nigeria. The use of a structured and comprehensive search of scholarly sources such as Scopus, Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Research Gate to identify sixty-five (65) publications between the years 2000 and 2025, this period was considered so as to examine the education system and funding assistance under democracy government in Nigeria. The researchers used key words such as donor-funded infrastructure, educational funding, donor-funded building, higher education development, factors influencing donor-funded building, and impact of factors influencing donor-funded adoption, and then screened them to identify forty-four (44) relevant studies and publications that met the research purpose based on a review of the title, abstract, and full manuscript using clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The material collected and analysis was based on theme synthesis with the extension of the PRISMA declaration (Compennolle *et al.*, 2020; Sarkis-Onofre *et al.*, 2021) which allowed the evidence to be categorized, grouped and interpreted into major sub-heading related to the study. This methodological approach is appropriate in that it provides a transparent and rigorous basis for synthesizing findings from different studies, and also generates broader analytical insights on adoption patterns and outcomes in the Nigerian context (Thomas & Harden, 2008). To improve reporting quality, reproducibility, and clarity, the review strategy was designed in accordance with established principles for reporting literature search techniques in systematic reviews (Rethlefsen *et al.*, 2021).

Findings and Discussion

The aim of this review was to examine the impact of factors influencing the adoption of donor-funded higher education buildings in Nigeria within the last twenty-five (25) years through findings and assertions of forty-four (44) manuscripts to established the impact of influencing factors on the adoption of donor-funded higher education buildings in Nigeria. We found that education funding in Nigeria is adequately low compare to UNESCO

recommendation because it's a determinant of the nation's internal generated revenue which has led to low supply of fund towards education system as opined by Ijaiya and Lawal (2004) and Ochuba (2001) coupled with the fact that enrollment is on the increase. This situation has weakened the system for both students and lecturers on productivity especially in tertiary institutions of learning. Furthermore, within two decades and half, the study discovered that infrastructure decadence in higher education has decrease academic performance despite increase enrollment as opined by Ignatius and Umotong (2022). This has led to a call for stakeholders for financial and developmental as donor funding to argument government effort as explained by Gachui (2017) especially in developing nation like Nigeria due to level of poverty. This donor funding has been deduced to aid provision of educational facilities in higher education system.

In addition, it was found that the provision of educational facilities such as buildings among others by stakeholders or individual that is referred to as donor fund in higher education is very low, and some of these provision that have been made in the past failed to meet desire goal and objectives as justified by Kiara and Luketero (2018). Meanwhile, the study revealed that the failed in the actualization of the goal and objectives of these donor-funded projects depend on some crucial influencing factors such as policy and regulatory environment by the government, host community involvement, donor priorities and funding rules, construction cost of the project, and safety and political stability within a particular time. These factors determined the level at which donor-funding is available and adopted as explained by various authors (Marks, 2014; Atta et al., 2024; Tursunov, 2022; Isah et al., 2023; Arogundade et al., 2019), this implies that donor believed that the desire goal and objectives for such project is achievable and impactful under the stated factors, and its sustainability can be attain throughout the project lifecycle.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study shed light on the state of educational system funding in Nigeria and the factors that influenced donor support by stakeholders or individuals over the previous two and a half decades. It was shown that Nigeria's educational funding system is inadequate, which has hampered the productivity of students and lecturers in the higher education system, particularly in the provision of infrastructure, despite increased enrolment. Donor-funded participation in augmenting government efforts in Nigerian institutions is at low stage due to reliance on significant influencing factors, despite the fact that the initiatives are critical in addressing existing deficiencies in building and other critical academic infrastructure, but the successful adoption of such buildings is heavily dependent on recipient institutions' willingness to adopt, manage, and sustain them. To ensure that donor-supported buildings remain fully operational, productive, and in line with Nigerian higher education's long-term development needs, higher institutions and relevant authorities should improve planning and accountability, mechanisms, managerial and technical capacity, and establish clear maintenance frameworks.

Given the current state of the Nigerian education system, particularly in tertiary institutions, this research is timely because it provides insight into the current state of educational infrastructure, and the paper will be useful to policymakers, stakeholders, and individuals in drawing their attention to a better path toward education sustainability in the higher education system. Finally, while this paper focused on qualitative research to assess the impact of influencing factors on donor-funded building adoption in higher education, additional research using quantitative research methods could increase the study's validity.

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