

## **Investigation into the Percieved Falling Standard of Education in the Nigerian University Education**

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### **Abstract**

The sorry state of the education sector in Nigeria, especially the tertiary level is quite alarming. In fact investigation has revealed that the education sector is the least sector the government takes seriously in this country. The adverse effect of this neglect has gotten to a magnitude that if nothing is done urgently to arrest the situation: our generation unborn in this country will be a generation without future. This paper sought to investigate the perceived falling standard of education in the Nigerian tertiary education. The sample consisted of one hundred and fifty (150) students from the Niger Delta University, one hundred and fifty (150) students from the Federal University, Otueke and one hundred stake holders. Altogether, four hundred respondents were randomly selected for the study. Mean and standard deviation and T-test statistical method were employed to analyze the hypothesis raised and tested for significance at alpha level of 0.77 and 0.71 respectively. Findings revealed that some of the problems contributing to the falling standard of education include - corruption too much rots and decay especially in the area of infrastructural facilities. In the light of the above discoveries, recommendations were made: Government should consider the 26% education allocation recommended by UNESCO. There should be less emphasis on paper qualification in the labour market.

**Keywords:** Falling standard, Tertiary education, Paper qualification, Labour market, Human development.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education in Nigeria is an instrument “Par excellence” for effecting national development. Government has stated that for the benefit of all citizens, the country’s educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society, in consonance to the realities of our environment and the modern world. (FRN 2013:13). Education provides the foundation and necessary springboard to launch the country on the path of technological and economic development. Any serious minded government should not in any way pay lip-service over education matters. This is because the education sector is the sector that affects other sectors, hence when sick all other sectors are as well sick. Ominiwe, (2013) observed that the neglect of this sector has put Nigeria in shambles today. “When the future leaders and engine room of any nation are not what they should be doing, there will be disaster” (Ominiwe, 2013:37). He insists that education sector must change focus to the direction of addressing the challenges of unemployment, productivity in employment, technological development, real sector development and ultimately, competition for the international market towards economic development.

Babatope, (2013) opines that meaningful education must involve “general education as well as such specifics as the study of technologies and related sciences with the aim of acquiring competence, practical skills and knowledge, relating to the various sectors of our country’s socio-economic development.

In today’s rapidly globalized economy, there is increasing pressure to produce graduates who are equipped with the skills relevance to the world of work. The question is how can Nigeria as a nation achieve quality or meaningful education that will equip today’s youths with meaningful skills and knowledge with the kind of rot/ruin in our education sector at all levels, especially at the tertiary level. Students these days are out of school longer than necessary as a result of frequent standoff between the teacher’s union and the government.

Fafunwa, (2010) blamed the rot/ruin in the education sector leading to falling standard of education in Nigeria to overpopulation without adequate facilities/infrastructure. He had this to say “You should be mindful of the fact that if you are dealing with small number of students with surplus facilities and well motivated cum qualified teachers, quality will be guaranteed and so there will be a big gap in quality when doing the same with a huge number of students in a crowded classroom using inadequate and obsolete equipment with disillusioned teachers. Before and after independence facilities were superb, we had fewer number of students. Teacher’s welfare was adequate and the general environment was good. We had classes with fewer pupils, this made us forget that a classroom is not expandable and there would be need to build more classes and train more quality teachers. In 1960, the total number of pupils was less than five million, while that of secondary schools was less than a million. By the introduction of Universal Primary Education, primary school pupils increased to 15 million, while the secondary school rose to over two million. This is a sizable increment but quality was lacking.” Fafunwa, (2010) went further to say that the same yardstick could be used for University of Nsukka. Outside the five Universities established in 1962, he said some other Universities were created shortly after the military came in. In 1979, higher education was put under the concurrent list. Due to this, both state governments and private sector was encouraged to start universities. So many mushroom universities with lecture rooms in garages were set. Between 1960 and 1990, there were over 70 universities owned by the government and the private sector. But between 1999 and 2010, there were over 73 universities. Fafunwa, (2010) decried that Nigerian politicians were good at building edifices which people will see and clap for them, but they will not provide the most important facilities to drive the universities. ‘We have done well in quantity, but when you look at the quality, you will be shocked particularly in public universities. Most laboratories in most of these public universities have outlined their usefulness. A laboratory set up for 100 students is now being used by over 600 students. As a nation, we have grown the sector quantity but we are very short in quality. And at the root of this mess is corruption” (Fafunwa 2010: 4).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The importance of education to human being can not over be emphasized. Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by the reason of being human. Education is an important factor in every individual’s life. Education is the key to a better future. It is an instrument for human development and economic growth. Education as earlier said is the bedrock of any development thus, any serious government must not play lip-service with this crucial sector. Ominiwe (2013) observed that education sector is for the purpose of refreshing our memory and feeding other sectors, hence when sick, all other sectors will also

be sick. "When the future leaders and engine room of any nation is not doing what they should be doing, there will be disaster" (Ominiwe, 2013:37).

It is generally perceived that there is a serious rot in our education sector as a result of neglect, non-challant attitude of government over education matters. The problem in the education sector is deeply rooted to high level of corruption in the country leading to the falling standard of education in Nigeria.

It has been observed that secondary school students of today can not in any way be compared or equated with primary school leavers of the years past in terms of academic excellence, especially in terms of spoken and written English. Agreeing with Olamide (2012), the problem in the education sector emerged from the neglect which the sector suffered from in the 1980s and over emphasis on paper qualification leading to the gradual corrosion of the system.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives for this study are:

1. To ascertain if there is any significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education and inadequate funding of the education sector in Nigeria?
2. To find out if there is any significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education in Nigeria and corruption/politics in the Nigerian education sector?
3. To ascertain if there is any significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education in Nigeria and the over emphasis on paper qualification in the labour market?
4. To find out if there is any significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education and lack of infrastructural facilities in Nigerian schools?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the course of the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education and inadequate funding of the education sector in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education and corruption/politics in the Nigerian education sector.
3. There is no significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education in Nigeria and the over emphasis on paper qualification in the labour market.
4. There is no significant relationship between the perceived falling standard of education and the lack of infrastructural facilities in Nigerian schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study will go a long way to x-ray the real causes of the falling standard of education in Nigerian education sector in order to make meaningful suggestions in overcoming such problems. The suggestions made in this study will go a long way to remedy/reduce the rot corroding our school system.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey method. The population comprised one hundred and fifty (150) students from the Niger Delta University, and one hundred and fifty (150) from the Federal University, Otueke. Three hundred students from the two Universities in Bayelsa State were randomly selected for the study. Also one hundred (100) stake-holders comprising senior staff members of financial department of the universities, parents and members of the public

were randomly selected. Altogether, four hundred (400) respondents were selected and used for the study.

### INSTRUMENT

A structural questionnaire titled investigation into perceived falling standard of education in Nigerian Universities (IPFSENU) was developed and used for the study. It was validated by two lecturers who are experts in measurement and evaluation. A trial test was conducted and analyzed to determine the reliability level of the instrument, and that stood at 0.77 and 0.71 for students and stakes holder respectively.

### Administration and Analysis of Data

The instrument were administered personally by the researchers and were all retrieved back and analyzed using T-test statistical method.

### DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Summary of mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education.**

S/N	Inadequate funding of the education sector	Mean	SD
1	Lack of funding the education sector has contributed to the falling standard of education	2.82	0.849
2	Falling standard of education is traceable to population explosion at the three level of education in Nigeria as a result of poor funding	2.81	0.899
3	Both federal and state government spend little in the education sector	2.70	0.845
4	Nigeria is the least country in Africa in terms of budgetary allocation to education	2.69	0.911
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>0.876</b>

**Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N = 200**

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that, all the item mean scores of 2.82, 2.81, 2.70 and 2.69, were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole the grand mean score of 2.76 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria. In order to ascertain if this relationship is significant, the mean scores were subjected to simple regression analysis (see Table 6).

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria?

The data presented in Table 2 shows that, all the item mean scores of 2.68, 2.88, 2.74 and 2.68 were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole the grand mean score of 2.70 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of

education in Nigeria. In order to ascertain if this relationship is significant, the mean scores were subjected to the simple regression analysis (see Table 7).

**Table 2: Summary of mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education**

S/N	Corruption and politics in the education sector	Mean	SD
1	The rot in the school system is linked to corruption in the country	2.68	0.836
2	Politics and high level of corruption has contributed tremendously to the falling standard of education in Nigeria	2.68	0.877
3	Politics in Nigeria has permeated into the education sector	2.74	0.848
4	Politics in the education sector enhances quality in the system	2.68	0.966
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>0.882</b>

**Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N = 200**

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Summary of mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the relationship between paper qualification and falling standard of education.**

S/N	Paper qualification	Mean	SD
1	Labour market based their employment on mostly paper qualification	2.80	0.833
2	Paper qualification by labour market encourages falling standard of education.	2.81	0.915
3	The mass rush for paper qualification rather than quality education among Nigerian students is one of the leading factors for the country's falling standard of education	2.73	0.867
4	A lot of Nigeria graduates are ill-equipped with skills needed in labour market as a result of paper qualification	2.59	0.972
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>0.897</b>

**Cut-off Mean = 2.50, N = 200**

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that, all the item mean scores of 2.80, 2.81, 2.73 and 2.59 were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole the grand mean scores of 2.73 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a relationship between paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria. In order to ascertain if this relationship is significant, the mean scores were subjected to the simple regression analysis (see Table 8).

**Research Question 4:** What is the relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria?

**Table 4: Summary of mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education.**

S/N	Lack of Infrastructural Facilities	Mean	SD
1	Nigerian Universities lack laboratories for practical works	2.76	0.915
2	There are no sufficient infrastructures to accommodate the large number of students in Nigerian Universities	2.90	0.885
3	The libraries in Nigerian Universities are ill-equipped	2.71	0.866
4	The learning materials in the Universities are not enough to cater for the teeming population of Nigerian students.	2.69	0.926
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.898</b>

**Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N = 200**

The data presented in Table 4 indicates that, all the item mean scores of 2.76, 2.90, 2.71 and 2.69, were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole the grand mean score of 2.77 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria. In order to ascertain if this relationship is significant, the mean scores were subjected to simple regression analysis (see Table 9).

### HYPOTHESIS TESTING

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Simple regression analysis of the relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education.**

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F-cal	Sig	Decision at P<0.05
Regression	25.057	1	25.057	27.606	0.000	*
Residual	179.723	198	0.908			
Total	204.780	199				

\* = Significant at  $p < 0.05$  alpha level; Critical F 1, 198 = 3.84; N = 200

Data presented in Table 5 shows that the simple regression analysis is significant at  $p < 0.05$  alpha level because, the calculated F-value of 27.606 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 alpha level with 1 and 198 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria is upheld.

**Hypotheses 2:** There is no significant relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria.

**Table 6: Simple regression analysis of the relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education.**

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F-cal	Sig	Decision at P<0.05
Regression	8.962	1	8.963	9.063	0.003	*
Residual	195.817	198	0.989			
Total	204.780	199				

\* = Significant at p<0.05 alpha level; Critical F 1, 198 = 3.84; N = 200

Data presented in Table 6 reveals that the simple regression analysis is significant at p<0.05 alpha level because, the calculated F-value of 9.063 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 alpha level with 1 and 198 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria is upheld.

**Hypotheses 3:** There is no significant relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria.

**Table 7: Simple regression analysis of the relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education.**

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F-cal	Sig	Decision at P<0.05
Regression	16.627	1	16.627	17.498	0.000	*
Residual	188.133	198	0.950			
Total	204.780	199				

\* = Significant at p<0.05 alpha level; Critical F 1, 198 = 3.84; N = 200

Data presented in Table 7 shows that the simple regression analysis is significant at p<0.05 alpha level because, the calculated F-value of 17.498 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 alpha level with 1 and 198 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria is upheld.

**Hypotheses 4:** There is no significant relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria.

**Table 8: Simple regression analysis of the relationship between infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education.**

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F-cal	Sig	Decision at P<0.05
Regression	14.190	1	14.190	14.742	0.000	*
Residual	190.590	198	0.963			
Total	204.780	199				

\* = Significant at p<0.05 alpha level; Critical F 1, 198 = 3.84; N = 200

Data presented in Table 8 shows that the simple regression analysis is significant at  $p < 0.05$  alpha level because, the calculated F-value of 14.742 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 alpha level with 1 and 198 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria is rejected. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria is upheld.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education the result in table 5 indicates that, there is a significant relationship between inadequate funding of the sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This is supported by the findings of the research question one. This simply means that inadequate funding of the education sector contributes to falling standard of education. From table 1, it is observed that the grand mean score of 2.76 was greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The findings from this study is in agreement with the findings of Obanya (2011) who noted that, there is a significant relationship between inadequate funding of the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria.

#### **Corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education**

The result in table 6 shows that, there is a significant relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria. This is supported by the findings of the research question two. This simply means that corruption and politics in the education sector contributes to falling standard of education. From table 2, it is revealed that the grand mean score of 2.76 was greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between corruption and politics in the education sector and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The findings of this study is in agreement with the findings of Obanya (2011) who attest that politics in Nigeria has not been directed in nation building, which would have entailed a human development mission for the country, as a platform on which the development of education would have been built. Channeling resources to areas that are most likely to lay the foundation for sustainable human development. Fafunwa (2010), in his own opinion that there is a significant relationship between corruption and politics and falling standard of education in Nigeria, has this to say "As a nation we have grown the education sector in quantity but we are very short in quality. And the root of this mess is corruption. Name any problem we have in this country and I will tell you corruption is the root. If there is a plane crash, car crash, bad road, poor health facilities, bad economy, insecurity, bad education, corruption is at the bottom of all these challenges and we must kill corruption before it kills us" (Fafunwa 2010:4).

#### **Over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education**

The result in table 7 reveals that, there is a significant relationship between over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This is supported by the findings of the research questions three. This simply means that over emphasis on paper qualification contributes to falling standard of education. From table 3, it is indicated that the grand mean score of 2.70 was greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between the over emphasis on paper qualification and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The findings



of the study is supported with the findings of Alkali (2008), he is of the opinion that one of the ways of making education relevant is to train students in the professions and make them fit into the job market. It has been observed that in developed countries emphasis is laid on manipulative skills, ability to create and make things happen. Unfortunately in third world countries, Nigeria is particular, if you do not have a degree certificate; you are not sealable in the labour market. Too much emphasis on paper qualifications have pushed Nigerian students to do what is not expected of them during examination, thereby reducing the standard of education and quality of certificate they graduate with.

### **Lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education**

As regards lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education, the results in table 8 indicates that, there is a significant relationship between the lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This is supported by the findings of the research question four. This simply means that lack of infrastructural facilities contributes to falling standard of education. From table 4, it is observed that the grand mean score of 2.77 was greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigeria. The findings of this study is in agreement with the findings of Fasisi (2013), who says that infrastructural facilities are physical and spatial enablers of teaching and learning which increases the production of results, their absence or inadequacy do not encourage a conducive environment for knowledge and skill acquisition. Elijah (2013) lamented that many universities lack essential teaching and learning facilities. Unamba (2013) in his contribution that there is a significant relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education decried that many students on internship in his laboratory do not know how to use the microscope. Putting it in his own words "There is very little improvement in the education sector. Imagine a microbiology student that has been in the university for about three years and has not used the microscope. What is he learning? When they come on industrial attachment that is the first time they are able to touch a microscope and I begin to wonder when they will have time for practice?" (Unamba 2013:26).

Funfuwa (2010) frowned that our politicians are good at building edifices which people will see and clap for them but they will not provide the most important facilities and equipment to drive these universities. He observed that most laboratories in these public universities have outlived their usefulness. Obanya (2014) laments that physical and psycho-social infrastructure is in short supply in almost all the public primary and secondary schools. The situation is certainly one of the quality inputs. Quality processes and quality outcomes will therefore be hard to find. These observations are indication that there is indeed a significant relationship between lack of infrastructural facilities and falling standard of education in Nigerian schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

Education provides the foundation and necessary springboard to launch the country on the path of technological and economic development. This is because in today's rapidly globalised economy, there is increasing pressure to produce graduates who are equipped with the skills relevant to the world of work. Thus, there is need to switch from emphasis on paper qualification kind of education to practical skills application. It therefore becomes very necessary that such education must be relevant, meaningful and of standard.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Budgetary allocation to education should be increased by the government
2. Government should consider the 26% education allocation recommended by UNESCO.
3. There should be much emphasis on acquisition of relevant skills rather than too much emphasis on paper qualification in the labour market.
4. There is need for the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities for effective teaching and learning in schools.
5. Law against corruption in Nigeria should be enacted and enforced irrespective of who is involved.
6. There is need for federal and state government in Nigeria to adequately fund/maintain the existing universities as suggested by Igborgbor (2013) instead of establishing more new ones.