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PRINCIPALS' INNOVATIVE FUNDING STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Funding plays a crucial role in the development and sustainability of the education system. Unfortunately, the decline in global oil prices has significantly impacted the funding of educational programs in Nigeria, highlighting the need for school administrators to explore alternative funding sources. This study examined the relationship between principals' innovative funding strategies and the sustainability of the secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria. The research employed a correlational design, with a population of 281 principals from public secondary schools in the state. A census technique was used to select all principals for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Principals' Innovative Funding Strategies and Sustainability of Secondary Education System Questionnaire (IFSSSESQ), which was validated by five experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha, yielding reliability estimates of .78 and .83. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance, with data analyzed using SPSS version 26. The findings revealed a significant relationship between crowdfunding, alumni donations, and the revitalization of business ventures with the sustainability of the secondary education system. The study concluded that for a sustainable secondary education system, principals must innovatively generate additional revenue to supplement government funding. It is recommended that school administrators adopt multiple revenue-generating strategies to effectively manage their schools and ensure long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Innovative, funding, strategies, sustainability, secondary education system**.**

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Introduction

Secondary school is a vital tier of the educational system in Nigeria. It is basically the form of education that students acquire after primary education, which also qualifies them for tertiary education. Secondary education in Nigeria is intended for people between the ages of 12-17 years. It is the bridge between primary and tertiary education (Muraina, 2014). Some of the broad goals of secondary education as conceived by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013) are, to prepare students for useful living and for higher education attainment. This level of education plays a crucial role in equipping students with foundational academic knowledge, vocational skills, and critical thinking abilities essential for higher education, employment, and national development. Etor et al. (2019) asserted that by the time students complete secondary school, they should have acquired the necessary skills for either advancing their education or entering the workforce. Similarly, Osha et al. (2024) highlighted that secondary education aims to equip students with new skills, tacit knowledge, cultural awareness, positive attitudes, and innovative problem-solving abilities applicable to real-life situations.

The attainment of these noble goals and the sustainability of secondary education is dependent upon adequate funding. Sustainable development refers to the making of assumptions for a better future with a well-developed society in which the needs of the citizens will be adequately met but without denying the society any of its present achievement. Put simply, there can be no sustainable development without a functional educational system which is possible through proper funding. Since education serves as the main instrument for achieving sustainability, it should be given the necessary attention (Nwogu, & Moses, 2020). Sustainability of secondary education implies continuity. It means keeping all programmes and activities of secondary school system functional to meet the present needs of the students without compromising the needs of the future generations (Igbokwe & Oteh, 2018; Obona, Sampson & Ekeuwei, 2021).

The dictionary (Robinson: 1425) defines 'sustain', the root word from which sustainability was derived, as "to keep going; to withstand; to maintain or prolong". The general idea of sustainability is centered on the fact that it is not enough to start something without any plans to continue with it. Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) developed by UNESCO, serve as the blueprint in addressing current world problems among which are poverty, quality education and environmental degradation (Culala, & Vinuya, 2020). Specifically, Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) states that the goal of quality education is to "commit every single country to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (OECD 2019, p. 2).

The goal of secondary education in relation to achieving the tenets of SDG is ensure that all learners will have free access to equitable and quality education that leads to relevant outcomes. This will be achieved by providing the necessary tools for learners to succeed and the willingness and

the capacity of the nations to bolster the education sector (Bourn, Hunt, Bamber, 2017; Culala & Vinuya, 2020). Another goal is that every classroom will be free of gender disparities by ensuring equal access to education and vocational training, including the minorities, indigenous people, and children with disabilities (Education International 2017). More so, it aims to promote inclusivity in all facets of the society, especially those who are in conflict areas. Thus, secondary school system sustainability involves continuity with the stipulated objectives of secondary education to ensure that its benefits to the students and the society are preserved. Education for sustainability is the practice of learning how to achieve global and local sustainable communities (Ukpong, & Uzoigwe, 2020; Obona, Sampson & Ekeuwei, 2021).

Some strategic dimension of sustainable secondary education that requires proper and urgent attention by stakeholders as noted by (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020) are; quality teaching, learning facilities, school environment, and the relevance of curriculum contents to the learners. Thus, the attainment of sustainable secondary education goals requires a conducive and supportive learning environment, availability of facilities and relevant curricula, which will enhance students' attitudes toward sustainable learning (Ameh, Wonah & Nwannunu, 2018). However, there has been increased concern about the quality of teaching, learning and output in Nigeria. For example, Breadth, Bua and Adzongo (2014) noted the poor state of secondary schools in Nigeria. The education system has not adequately equipped students with the requisite knowledge, capacity and skills for productivity due to inadequacy of infrastructure, learning facilities and poor libraries (Irikana & Weli, 2019). This has led to the production of unqualified human resources with no basic practical, technical skills and competence to work towards sustainable national development. Providing a sustainable education for the citizenry is a necessity, but there can be no such education without adequate funding.

Funding is one crucial tool for the development of any educational system. It is the process of sourcing for the needed resources without necessarily depending on the governmental capital and recurrent grants (Ogundele & Danbaba, 2017). Funding has been identified as one of the most crucial factors in improving the quality of education (Idialu & Idialu, 2012). However, one major challenge confronting education in general and secondary schools in particular, is gross underfunding (Ahmed, 2011). Similarly, Ahmed and Adepoju (2013) identified poor funding as one of the factors responsible for the slow pace of educational development in Nigeria. The sudden massive rise in the number of secondary schools and in students' enrolment in Nigeria has gotten to the point where the Government can no longer sorely shoulder the responsibility of funding educational institutions. Ajayi and Ekundayo (2006) noted that the Nigerian government finds it difficult to meet up with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation to allocate 26% of the total budget to education sector. The problem may be due to the global fall

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in oil prices which also affected Nigeria whose main source of revenue generation is oil, as well as the fact that other sectors of the economy are equally relying on the government for funding. This has affected the proper funding of education generally and secondary schools particularly in Nigeria (Okojie, 2009, Ipaye, 2007; Ahmed & Adepoju, 2013, cited in Irikana & Weli, 2019). The Federal Government of Nigeria, (2013) clearly acknowledged that education is an expensive social service and its funding is a joint responsibility of the Federal, State, Local governments and the private sector.

The challenge of inadequate funding of educational institutions has a significant effect on the performance of staff and students. Supporting this view, Ekundayo (2008) cited in Ameh, Wonah and Nwannunu (2018) noted that most of the capital projects being undertaken have been abandoned due to lack of funds. He further stated that the pressure on the inadequate resources has led to a decline on the staff welfare package and remuneration coupled with depreciation of working conditions and environment. Worried about the persistent complaints of poor funding of educational institutions, and to solve the problem, the Federal Government issued a directive through the NUC, mandating universities to generate 10 percent of their funds internally through various revenue diversification means (Ojule, 2016). This is applicable at the secondary education level.

The inability of the government to adequately fund public secondary education implies that the secondary school administrators must think outside the box and seek new strategies for generation of funds instead of complaining or rely solely on government interventions. This development has called on educational administrators to become innovative in their approach to generate funds both internally and externally to support government effort. It was based on the foregoing that the researchers seek to examine the relationship between innovative funding strategies and secondary education system sustainability in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Adequate financing of secondary education in Nigeria has been a major challenge of government over the years. Inadequate funding of education has resulted to poor state of schools, lack of physical facilities, loss of human capital, overcrowding, and absence of current technological instructional materials. The situation has made the management of secondary school a huge challenge for administrators, and the attainment of educational goals seems impossible. Under the present situation, the students are the most affected as they are deprived of proper acquiring the right training which is to make them productive and useful after graduation from secondary education. Therefore, the need for school administrators to think of alternative strategies for funding secondary education more so as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2014) openly acknowledged that education is an expensive social service and its funding is a joint responsibility of the Federal, State, Local governments and the private sector. At this point, the researchers

are wondering if they can ever be meaningful sustainable national development when students are not receiving proper training due to lack of modern facilities, instructional materials and conducive learning environment as a result of poor funding of secondary education. Hence, developing alternative means of funding secondary education may be a solution to this unending problem. Thus, it is pertinent to raise the question: what is the relationship between principals' innovative funding strategies and sustainability of secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between principals' innovative funding strategies and sustainability of secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain if a relationship exists between:

1. Crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system.
2. Donations from alumni association and sustainability of secondary education system.
3. Revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system.
2. Donations from alumni association does not significantly relate to sustainability of secondary education system.
3. There is no significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system.

Review of related literature

Crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system

Innovative funding, alternative funding and internally generated Revenue for educational funding have been widely researched. Stan (2014) explained innovative funding in education entails that school administrators develop and implement ideas that will help them to depend less on government for funding and instead come up with self-funding as basic condition of survival in the context of a competitive educational reality. It is seen as a conduit of new ideas that school principal put in place to foster creativity through the application of these ideas, (Omur & Argon, 2016). Adewunmu (2015) mentioned some of the alternative sources of school funding such as: payment for extra lesson, appeal fund raising, community involvement, parent teacher association (PTA), non-governmental organizations (ngos), old student's association use of direct labour, proceeds from school programmes and donation. In the same vein, Ugwu and Nnebedum (2018) enumerated the following alternative sources: agricultural-based income generating activities, alumni consultancies, international aids, tuition gifts, fees, grants and endowment investment income, private business-based

income generating activities, parents and community involvement.

In contemporary higher education systems, funding is increasingly associated with performativity, assessment, and competition, and universities are seeking different forms of financing their activities. One of these new forms is crowdfunding (Horta, Meoli & Vismara, 2022). Yakubu (2016) perceived crowdfunding as a creative social investment to sustain the Nigerian educational system through social economics, impact investment and creative economics. Crowdfunding is a funding strategy whereby small sums of investments or contributions are collected from the general public and used to finance the development of projects, goods and services. Younghwan.and Junseok (2018) in their study established the usefulness of crowdfunding as a viable new funding alternative. Results indicate that the key factors influencing user intention to crowdfund appropriate projects include social influence, effort expectancy, and perceived trust. The results suggest that crowdfunding is closer in nature to donations.

Similarly, Horta, Meoli and Vismara (2022) investigated crowdfunding in education and pointed out that crowdfunding is a viable means of obtaining additional financing for learning activities that complements the funding from other sources. The study showed that crowdfunding is used more by universities that have fewer resources. Akeke, Ekpoh and Osim (2020) noted that most school Principals do not really have alternative sources of financing their schools. The researchers suggested that Principal should not depend on government alone for financing but embark on entrepreneurial activities such as fishery, poultry and other vocational activities to generate money to finance their schools.

Donations from alumni association and sustainability of secondary education system

Alumni are associations formed by individuals who are products of a particular educational institution. It is similar to the old student's association formed in some educational institutions. Nwafor, Uchendu and Akani (2015) concluded that financial support from alumni is another way of generating funds for the administration of secondary education in the country. Frequent meetings are usually organized by these individuals where funds can be raised for the administration of their various schools. The principal can appeal to the school alumni to contribute to the affairs of the school where they graduated from. Such association serves as a means for generating funds for the administration of the school. Banka (2019) investigated the influence of alumni associations on the management of public universities in the North Central States of Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of study comprised 12,426 and 1243 (10%) was used as sample for the study. The instruments for data collection were a structured questionnaire and titled Influence of Alumni Association on the Management of Public Universities (IAAMPUQ). Findings revealed a significant influence of alumni contributions in the area of instructional facilities.

Chadamoyo and Dumbo (2012) investigated alumni engagement in collaborative partnership for improved service delivery at the institution. A descriptive survey design was used with questionnaires and interviews as data gathering instruments. A random sample of 40 alumni members (25 females and 15 males) participated in the study. Results showed that alumni association enhance service delivery, in terms of motivation of students, provision of learning materials such as e-learning technologies, knowledge building through networking, and fundraising projects for school capacity building.

Revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system

Revitalization of business ventures, as an innovative funding strategy involves adopting entrepreneurial approaches such as establishing school-run enterprises, optimizing internally generated revenue, and utilizing technology for fundraising. This strategy can help principals to secure additional funds beyond government allocations. It can also help improve infrastructure, enhance educational programs, and ensure the financial sustainability of schools, ultimately fostering a more effective and resourceful learning environment.

Principal can generate money for the administration of the school through the establishment and revitalization of business ventures in the school. For example, he or she can build mini-shops where consumables are sold to students, parents and the members of the public. Nyeh and Kpee (2019) submitted that principals with the cooperation of other staff of the school can provide commercial services to members of the public as well as those within the school at an agreed rate. This can help the principal to generate additional revenue for the administration of the school. Amaechina, Obioha and Obioha (2020) studied the alternative sources of funding secondary education in Enugu education zone. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population was 291 Principals in public secondary school in Enugu education zone. A stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of 61 urban principals and 55 rural principals (116 principals) in secondary schools in Enugu education zone that was used for the study. The data for the study was gathered with a questionnaire. The finding showed that that the community fund schools by erecting structures that help in funding secondary schools.

Although several studies have been conducted on funding, internally Generated Revenue (IGR) and Sustainability of Education, such as Ukpong and Uzoigwe (2020); Irikana and Weli (2019); Ameh, Wonah and Nwannunu (2018); Banka (2019); Bua and Adzongo (2014); Chadamoyo and Dumbu (2012); Nwogu and Moses (2020); Nyeh and Kpee (2019); Ogundele and Danbaba (2017); and Ugwu and Nnebedum (2018), there seems to be minimal research on innovative funding and secondary education sustainability in Cross River State in particular. Therefore, this study was essentially designed to establish the relationship existing between innovative funding and secondary

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education system sustainability The need came as other researchers and scholars have not adequately addressed the relationship which exists between innovative funding and secondary education system sustainability specifically in Cross River State. Thus, the present study filled the gap in knowledge by investigating the relationship between principals' innovative finding strategies and secondary education sustainability.

Methodology

This research was carried out in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Cross River State has Calabar as its capital with eighteen (18) Local Government Areas. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. This design will allow the researchers to sample the opinions of respondents through the use of questionnaire, describe and interpret the findings based on the information obtained, and then generalize the findings of the study to other areas that was not covered by the study. This design was chosen because the researchers were interested in investigating the relationship between principals' innovative strategies and sustainability of secondary education in Cross River State. The population of this study comprised all two hundred and eighty-one (281) principals of public secondary schools in Cross River State. Census technique was adopted in selecting all the two hundred and eighty-one (281) public secondary school principals for the study. A 20-items structured questionnaire titled: Principals' Innovative Funding Strategies and Sustainability of Secondary Education System Questionnaire (IFSSSESQ) was used for data collection on four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SA). The face and content validation of the instrument were determined by three experts in Educational Management, and in Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Some items were modified while irrelevant ones were removed by the experts. Thereafter, the instrument was ascertained to be valid and usable. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach statistics and a reliability estimate of .78 and .83 was obtained, showing that the instrument was fit for used in the study. The instrument was administered by the researchers directly to the respondents upon attaining permission from the principals. During this stage, the researchers purposively sampled some 100 teachers to assess their principals in other to avoid information bias. At the end of the entire exercise, all the copies of the instruments were retrieved, and coded for analysis. Thus, the response rate was 100%. The data generated were coded and analyzed at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The answers are presented in tables.

Results

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between Crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyze this hypothesis as presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between Crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r	Sig.
Crowdfunding Strategy	281	10.80	2.318			
				279	.60**	.000
Sustainability of Secondary Education System		10.25	2.071			

***Significant at p<.05 df=281**

The result of table 1 above showed the correlation coefficients between crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for sustainability of secondary education system (r =.60, p<.05). Since *p* (.000) is less than *p* (.05), hypothesis one is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system.

Hypothesis two: Donations from alumni association does not significantly relate to sustainability of secondary education system. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyze this hypothesis as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between donations from Alumni Association and sustainability of secondary education system.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r	Sig.
Donations from Alumni Association	281	11.04	2.508			
				279	.52**	<.001
Sustainability of Secondary Education System		10.25	2.071			

***Significant at p<.05 df=281**

The result of table 2 above showed the correlation coefficients between donations from alumni association and sustainability of secondary education system. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for sustainability of secondary education system (r =.52, p<.05). Since *p* (.000) is less than *p* (.05), hypothesis two is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant moderate relationship between donations from alumni association and sustainability of secondary education system.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant relationship between revitalization of

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business ventures and sustainability of secondary education. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyze this hypothesis as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	r	Sig.
Revitalization of Business Ventures	281	10.56	2.348			
				279	.58**	.000
Sustainability of Secondary Education System		10.25	2.071			

***Significant at p<.05 df=281**

The result of table 3 above showed the correlation coefficients between revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for sustainability of secondary education system (r =.58, p<.05). Since *p* (.000) is less than *p* (.05), hypothesis three is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant moderate relationship between revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system.

Discussion

The study examined innovative funding and sustainability of secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria. The result of hypothesis one revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between crowdfunding strategy and sustainability of secondary education system. The implication is that the more innovative the principals is in seeking for crowdfunding support, the higher the revenue that would be generated for the sustainability of the secondary education system. The result is in line with the findings of Yakubu (2016) who sees crowdfunding as a creative social investment to sustain the Nigerian educational system through social economics, impact investment and creative economics. The result also agrees with Younghwan M.and Junseok (2018) findings that crowdfunding is a new and viable funding alternative. Similarly, Horta, Meoli and Vismara (2022) concluded that crowdfunding is a viable means of obtaining additional financing for learning activities that complements the funding from other sources.

The result of hypothesis two revealed a statistically significant relationship between donations from alumni association and sustainability of secondary education system. The result supports the findings of Nwafor, Uchendu and Akani (2015) who concluded that

financial support from alumni is another way of generating funds for the administration of secondary education in the country. The principal can appeal to the school alumni to contribute to the affairs of the school where they graduated from. Such association serves as a means for generating funds for the administration of the school. The findings are also in line with Chadamoyo and Dumbu (2012) position that alumni association enhance service delivery, in terms of motivation of students, provision of learning materials such as e-learning technologies, knowledge building through networking, and fundraising projects for school capacity building.

The result of hypothesis three also revealed a statistically significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures and sustainability of secondary education system. The result agrees with the conclusion of Nyeh and Kpee (2019) that principals with the cooperation of other staff of the school can provide commercial services to members of the public as well as those within the school at an agreed rate. Principal can generate money for the administration of the school through the revitalization of business ventures in the school. For example, he or she can build mini-shops where consumables are sold to students, parents and the members of the public. This can serve as a source of additional revenue for the administration of the school.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate a statistically significant relationship between crowdfunding strategy, donations from alumni, and the revitalization of business ventures in ensuring the sustainability of the secondary education system. This suggests that alternative funding mechanisms, particularly those leveraging community support and entrepreneurial initiatives, play a crucial role in addressing financial constraints in secondary education. By effectively utilizing crowdfunding and alumni donations, schools can secure additional resources to enhance infrastructure, improve learning conditions, and maintain long-term operational stability.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that:

1. School administrators should incorporate crowdfunding platforms into their financial planning by creating structured online campaigns that engage parents, alumni, and community members. This will help generate additional resources to support infrastructure development and enhance the learning environment.
2. Principals should establish strong alumni networks and implement structured donation programs to encourage consistent financial contributions. This can be achieved through alumni associations, fundraising events, and targeted giving campaigns to support school sustainability.
3. School administrators explore and invest in business ventures, such as school-run enterprises or income-generating projects, to create sustainable revenue streams.

Government agencies and private organizations should also provide training and support to enhance the financial management skills of school administrators.

Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating the significant role of crowdfunding strategies, alumni donations, and business venture revitalization in sustaining the secondary education system. Unlike previous research that primarily focused on government funding and traditional revenue sources, this study highlights alternative financial mechanisms that can enhance school sustainability. By providing empirical evidence of the positive relationship between these funding strategies and educational sustainability, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and stakeholders seeking innovative solutions to financial challenges in secondary education.

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