

An Assessment of Public Sector Involvement and Management Support in Tertiary Education Institutions of Namibia: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper aims to assess the Public Sector involvement and management support in tertiary institutions of Africa. The paper discusses how poverty has a negative impact on those students who would want to further their education and are not able to do so; as a result of their parents being trapped in poverty. Some governments of Africa have their ways of reaching out to such needy students. The government decided to provide courses such as educational diploma or degree which become entry requirements for any teacher. In Namibia, a course in education at tertiary level is freely offered by the university. This government commitment is ensuring that all students who have enrolled for these two courses or disciplines have access to tertiary education on the financial ticket of government and that once they complete they will be offered educational appointments as teachers. As years progress, this government financial support would be trimmed if the private sector is not involved. It is discovered that some students have completed their tertiary diplomas and degrees qualifications, but have to this end not been able to secure the job in the market.

Keywords: Public sector involvement; Marginalised groups; Management support; Non-equaliser; Private sector; Formula of funding by the state

Introduction

This paper emphasises the role of government involvement and support in ensuring support to educate the Namibian child, but faces challenges as a result of poverty. Namibia inherited a skewed nation in which there are challenges such as poverty, marginalised communities, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the reluctance of the private sector in paying or sponsoring students at universities, crime, high unskilled and literacy levels, etc. The paper further discusses the failure of tertiary institutions in standing on their own; as they thus continue to depend on government for their survival and existence.

Statement of the problem

Since attaining independence in March 1990, Namibia has since then went on to inherit societal imbalances, high poverty levels, the reluctance of the private sector in getting to fund learners who qualify for tertiary enrolments, the marginalised communities, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, crimes, high unskilled and literacy levels. The new other scourge for Namibia is corruption in which most profiled members of society are embroiled and continue to rob the citizens of the resources that were supposed to have developed them by way of wealth redistribution.

Literature Review

Poverty

Poverty is one of the factors that have a major damage on the African continent. Poverty is more serious as it is a non-equalizer in life. The situation that normally develops is that a student that is keener to learn and is willing to further his or her education would be cut short in the educational spectra. This student could have performed greatly in grade 12 which allows him or her to further his or her education, but only to find that he or she can no longer continue due to the fact that his or her parents are trapped in poverty and cannot proceed to pay for education in tertiary institutions. The government therefore has a way of getting how they would reach out to provide courses such as educational diploma or degree which are entry requirements for any teacher. This

course is free from the university. The government's commitment is ensuring that all students who have enrolled for these two courses or disciplines get access to tertiary education on the financial ticket of government. The poor and those who are interested to go for these courses now go into these streams and acquire those qualifications and are then given opportunity to be teachers in both government schools and private schools. During admissions, the marginalised are well identified and then given the opportunities to register and then study in the fields of their choices. For the entire period of their study they would be under the care of government and immediately after completion they would be absorbed in government schools where they would render services to the nation. As it can be observed here, the state will have more influence in the education because even those who are trained in tertiary institutions are full funded by the government. This in itself indicates that the public sector has a dominant role in tertiary institution influence and it goes without saying.

Because of poverty escalation in the country, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is measured on significant levels and continues to absorb financial resources for the government. Poverty is also exacerbated by lack of employment, which then gives rise to crimes. Inflation rates and government taxation systems are high and as a result, the reluctance of the private sector in sponsoring students at universities is resultant. High unskilled and literacy levels contribute to poverty as well, because a limited number of jobs in the market require skilled workforce. While this remains the challenge, Namibia has students who have completed tertiary degrees and diplomas, but have not penetrated the job markets and are wandering in the country without a job to lay a hand on.

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Affordability of registration and tuition fees is more of a disadvantage to many student populations who are interested to study further in different fields as they may not have financial supports.

Maggio [1] explains Clark's triangle as viewed by many today by saying: *"Clark's triangle has proved a resilient tool and is widely considered one of the most influential models for analysis of governance and authority relations in postsecondary education. However, thirty years after Clark produced his famous model we now revisit it under very different circumstances than those in which it was conceived. A confluence of social, economic and political factors over the past few decades has altered the roles and relationships of states, markets and academic oligarchies. These changes have important implications for how academic systems are ordered as well as for researches attempting to uncover the internal linkages that contribute to that order"*.

By implication, Maggio's findings are typical for Africa in which the governments are acting as a result of the social structure that they find themselves in. The issues of poverty, unemployment, marginalisation of some of the inhabitants of the countries, societal differences in education, values, etc. are all social problems that force the government to be more inclined to fund primary, secondary and tertiary education in all levels. For primary and secondary education, free education has been awarded and now there is a move to also make tertiary education free for all Namibians.

The three models of coordination that Clark identified and analysed are arguably to be of effect in the Namibian setup and The International University of management is not an exception of any of the other tertiary institutions of the country when it comes to government influence.

Supporting marginalised groups

As it has been observed in Namibia, the government is in any case to be the unifier of the various diversities in terms of ethnic and racial aspects of human beings in a country. Education is the greatest equaliser of any nation. A nation which is not educated is negligent and subjected to poverty and disease. Marginalised groups are said to be those who have no access to education, jobs, skills and requisite knowledge to compete in the labour market so that they could be afforded with employment. They are those worse off in a nation and are undergoing immense states of want in terms of survival as others do. They have no qualifications and experiences whatsoever about education or jobs in the market. They also do not have skills and knowledge to operate in the job market. This situation is said to have been inherited from colonial era and it was founded on this premise by government that education be addressed rigorously in order to equalise the nation in terms of resource allocation and receiving thereof.

Clearly, it can be seen that the state is in the background with its influence on the institutions and it is interesting to use Peters in his statements the Exploration in Governance, a collection of papers in honour of Christopher Hood [2] in which he stated: *"Where is the 'machinery of government' in all this? Did it disappear? Has the old machinery been replaced by more sophisticated mechanisms, a machinery of governance, less visible to the eye although much closer by means of a touchscreen (or a voice command)? Clearly, the hidden writing of the machinery of government is still there. Other bits of the machinery still feature prominently"*.

Lawton [3] questions what the role of higher institutions be like in the year 2020 and indeed, it is the prerogative of government to be more concerned of this. The government should ensure that it takes

its country in the next level of tertiary education in order to provide sound human resources that would be more helpful in propelling such a government socially, politically, economically, environmentally and technologically.

Ramsden [4] has stated that the phenomena of mass higher education and knowledge differentiation are inextricably linked to changes in internal management and the external relationships of universities with their environment. He further states that such differentiation include greater national and international competition. What has been observed so far is that traditional self-government and professional determination of standards in most tertiary institutions is replaced by stronger central administrative control and a more customer-driven view of quality and financial competitiveness than looking at the levels of people in society. Autonomy and academic principle, including commitment to fundamental values such as the right to protect a specialist area of knowledge, and to make decisions related to academic matters within the group, appear to be vanishing. This is so, because government take control of such institutions on its own and dictates what is to be done and not what is appropriate for the institution to do.

The role of a private sector

It is safe to say that here in Namibia, only 1% of support can come from private sectors such as banks, but the rest come from the government. Parastatals also play a very limited role in sending students for further education. Normally when a bank sends a student to further education at a tertiary institution that they fund, it will require that when such a student completes, he or she must come and work for a bank that sponsored him for a number of years equal to those that he or was sponsored for those studies. The disadvantage of bank sponsorship is that the student would not go for a career of his or her choice; as he or she would be forced to study in the field of commerce or any related field in the banking industry. Much to say here is that the private sector is not so much involved in training youth to have tertiary institutional qualifications, instead, the public trains and the private sector takes the trained staff from government. This as well shows that it is only government that trains; as the private sector is lax in this regard. When adverts come from the private sector, they state that they would consider courses in the line of commerce, and specifically, banking. The fact that the private sectors do little in funding students who want to further their education, the government is obliged to take a lead in this respect. Much leaves to be desired when it comes to the role the private sector plays in tertiary education. More credit and credibility is given and directed to the government as the main focus in catering for tertiary education. It is therefore mandatory to say that the state will still play a major role in this regard. In the issue: Differentiation - Africa lags behind (again) or does it? Professor Johan Muller of the University of Cape Town issued the following statements in the issue of 28 February 2014, a University World News Global Edition Issue No. 309, in which he stated that: *"The pact must also reach sufficient consensus. In The Netherlands, this meant that institutions that refused to go along with the pact lost 7% of their grants from the state. There was a mid-term review, that, if it turned out negatively, meant a loss of 2% of grant funding; and an end-of-term review where, again if negative, meant of loss of 7% of their future public funding"*. Here we can see that where a public sector has no competition with the private sector, the control is mainly in the hands of the state.

van Vught [5] is insistent of the fact that an independent commission should be created so that it can oversee the agreement between the institution and the state. He mentions that it should

have an *'independent secretariat and, crucially, sufficient expertise and legitimacy to run such an agreement'*. According to van Vught [5] as he further analyses, he states that the agreements between the state and an independent agency to act as monitor in the agreement between state and the institution might be cumbersome. In Namibia, the agreement is run between the institution and the state by the Ministry of Education on behalf of government. It must also be stated here that even the appointment of the Chancellor is the mandate of the State and is normally the incumbent President who becomes the Chancellor of the university. The Chancellor would then appoint the Vice Chancellor to run the day-to-day activities of the university on behalf of the state. The university is not independent per se. As a result of this; it leaves no room for private sector to have a hand in tertiary institutional matters or decisions.

Tertiary institutions in Namibia can form a niche of partnerships that are based on either shared visions or complementary capacities. Importantly, research partnerships with other institutions of higher learning can include business and industry. If tertiary institutions have highly integrated forms of partnerships that include joint academic posts, offering joint courses, and begin to offer integrated degree programmes, rather than joint or dual degrees, they can benefit more from each other and these should be supported by the Public Sector. Partners can be in fact separate entities, but it should be clear here that leadership and decision-making have become more decentralised, democratic and flat in industries that are disrupted as a result of the introduction of technology. Changes in job structures in tertiary institutions should adapt to the online revolution now in use and public sector should support this innovation. The tertiary institutions leadership should deal with students and staff in multiple locations, and even in places where national student associations do not exist. Management models have to adjust and provide policies that are tailor-made to meet the needs of tertiary institutions. The gradual withdrawal of the Public Sector from funding institutions of higher learning teaching in the developing world cannot be supported by the Public Sector in the African perspective. In the developed world, it can be suggested that this cannot be reversed if the global economy recovers in the next two decades. User pays is practised as a norm, while the withdrawal of public funding in wealthy countries is likely to progress well [6].

It is important that a shift to private sources of funding for higher education should be made with greater flexibility in terms of how money is used. Furthermore, governments that aim at decreasing spending in higher education institutions in Africa should ensure to attach conditions controlling those institutions. Governments should ensure that they encourage institutions to lower down tuition fees for courses and degrees. The online revolution and the ability to unbundle provision from awards should be supported by the Public Sector. The Public Sector should also maintain access to public loans and grants, which in turn would make this effort feasible. It must be mentioned here that top research universities will not be affected, because they are highly valued and accumulate funds through research work. The noted cultural divide and the perceptions between the elite regarding the institutions of higher learning will vary and continue to lose value in the African continent, because of political influences [6].

Sharrock [6] argues further that the rise of private and for-profit providers of higher education should be well-documented and encouraged. Institution that is funded by the Public Sector should see these private sector providers of higher education as partners rather than competitors as they both will cooperate in order to

sustain 'competitiveness'. The results will be that there will be more private degree-awards operating in any given country where private institutions and online higher learning is provided, but it will be less certain that even those funded by the Public Sector will be among them.

Failure of tertiary institutions to stand on their own

The other scenario is that these tertiary institutions cannot be self-reliant in terms of funding. Many times, these institutions nearly close doors due to lack of funds. The University of Namibia at many stages had no funds and was bailed out by the state. The Namibia University of Science and Technology (Polytechnic of Namibia) had to be bailed by the State last year by an amount of about N\$ 300 million. This was the time when it had been in the process of being elevated from a polytechnic to a university status and had embarrassment results. How is it possible that the institution wishes to graduate to a university status and has no funds? Such was one of the questions that the nation questioned about this institution. The state in this case becomes a saviour of institutions and the credibility is once more on the state to be the custodian of tertiary education in the country. Here, it clearly leaves no doubts that the state cannot have an influence on the affairs of the tertiary institutions. Even at The International University of Management, which is a private institution, the state is still playing a pivotal role in the payment of registration and tuition fees of students to a private university. This shows the commitment of government to that effect in tertiary education at institutional levels and thus the notion that the government is in charge instead of the institution itself. Shattock [7] has this to say on the role of the academic control of institutions:

"In what has constituted the most searching strategic decision that universities have had to make, governing bodies have been entirely dependent on the recommendations of their vice-chancellors and executives for determining tuition fees and bursary levels and on their assessment of the market in which their universities operated".

This is very true for The International University of Management in that it has the owner of the institution who is actually the founder of the university who is involved in decision-making with management. Every decision made should have a blessing of the owner and not by independent academic boards. The government has an influence on all universities including this university (The International University of Management).

Commission of the European Communities: A White Paper [8] states that change requires consented actions by all European institutions, present and future member states, regional and local authorities and civil society to work together and stand by that change. This calls for the state and the tertiary institutions to coordinate activities in order to have a harmonious relationship in decision-making that governs them.

Santiago et al. [9] in the executive summary of their paper observes that tertiary education contributes to social economic and economic development.

Significantly, changes brought by mass higher education stretch far beyond larger class sizes, more diverse groups of students, and different student attitudes. These have significantly changed management patterns, public perceptions of tertiary institutions, and the machinery of professional standards and accountability. The massive expansion in numbers of tertiary institutions has a telling effect that sees them to have been accompanied by the progression of the range of occupations that require a university educational qualification. Importantly and

in addition, tertiary education is expected to earn its funds, and this should be based on performance, instead of receiving government support. As the case may be, it has been of late discovered that the entire relationship between governments and universities continue to change significantly. In simpler terms, they are no longer viewed and colloquially perceived to be partners, but they stand to represent 'two parties with different interests and priorities that on the other hand could be seen as converging and on the other as sharply in conflict' [10].

In other scenario it is stated that alternative models to the traditional form of the university as a collegial, bureaucratic and often semi-anarchical organization following some arguments such as the corporate, the entrepreneurial, the enterprise, the service and the stakeholder model [11-15] have sprung forth. [16-18] also state the same principle and are as well intercepted in strengthening the same arguments as per findings concluded according to Bleiklie [11], Clark, [12], Jongbloed and Goedegebuure [13] Marginson and Considine [14] Tjeldvoll [15]. In general, it is mention that universities seem to be moving towards a managed professional public organization model as they advocate that in this type of organization 'productivity', 'client service', 'executives', 'competition' and 'marketing and growth strategies' become common concepts. In the observation made by Clark [19], it is stated that in the traditional conception of the university, leadership is considered to be rather weak, particularly in Continental Europe in which he views that the key actors are individual academics or small academic units rather than the university as an organization, and institutional management is neither a professional career path nor well developed. In the current understanding of the university, especially when the university focuses on the institution rather than the individual actor, leadership plays a more prominent role and loosely coupled systems become more tightly coupled, or could be perceived as advancing their attempts to realize this kind of leadership [20]. Importantly though, universities are increasingly working towards the need of demonstrating their effectiveness at meeting societal expectations, it so happens that the need for strong institutional management continues to emerge. However and above all, institutional management should be more business-like, while at the same time; 'democratic governance' is regularly seen as getting in the way of efficiency and effectiveness of such institutional management [21,22].

There is a need for the Public Sector and the institutions of higher learning to ensure that they understand the transition process and this is a requirement for almost any senior executive in the higher education environment. When the organization is in transition period, leaders themselves need help to cope with the transition. These executives should be so close to the changes in order for them remember that they themselves took some time to come to terms with the necessary change and that their followers will need at least as long to do so. They should also be able to understand why anyone would not embrace change, and so believe that their followers are ignorant, rigid, or outright hostile to the new direction. Furthermore, Bridges and Mitchell [23] state that executives should view the transitions as not necessarily the changes themselves that are holding people back and thereby threatening to make their change unworkable. Notably, most leaders come from backgrounds where technical, financial, or operational skills play a key role, and as such, those skills provide minimal assistance when it comes to leading people through transition. It is noteworthy to understand that such leaders could be pushing the limits of their understanding of the future, and would be thus in need of perspective and advice. And it is in this respect that a trusted colleague, confidant, coach, or

consultant could be acquired to offer valuable counsel to the leadership of the institutions of higher learning and the Public Sector.

Bridges and Mitchell [23] observe that no training program can prepare a leader for managing a transition and that as well that no leader can effectively lead change. Leadership is all about understanding and experiencing the transition process. As a result of the change and transition leaders require; leaders need to, instead, individualized assistance whereby they learn to create plans to bring their followers through the particular transition they face.

Because of the fact the ability of the Public Sector and the tertiary institutions to manage transition is revolving around the realities of an actual leadership in an actual situation, mutual trust between the public, private and tertiary leadership is vital. It is only in this way that the leadership and management could be honest enough to bring their fears and concerns regarding the control of these institutions. The Public Sector and the tertiary institutions should be able to gain personal insight and awareness of the transition process so that they can be carried into the future without any fears.

The most important factor here is the understanding of the dynamics of transition is far removed from the kind of leadership training most organizations provide. The focus of the leadership should not be on how to "be a leader" or even how to "change an organization" but on how to provide the particular kind of leadership that an organization in transition is capable of commanding and demanding. As a consequence, the results of the relationship are very specific and the development of new skills and behaviours should be geared on achieving the needs of the unique time and circumstances in which the person leads at a given time [23].

In fact, it is what the process of transition holds for leadership development that the relationship between the institutions of higher learning and the public sector leadership should portray to the leadership and not necessarily, the difference between a leader and the people that she or he "leads" [23].

Types of courses offered at tertiary institutions and the formula of funding by the state

The state has a larger share in deciding what courses must be offered and funded. For example, from last year alone, the government decided that all the three universities in Namibia must offer nursing and education as the most demanded courses in the country where shortages of skills are experienced severely. The government decided that all three institutions should admit 34 student nursing staffs and this was done by all institutions. The other one came in 2012 where it was decided that all institutions should offer training courses in education. All three institutions were inclined to do so because government was funding all these streams. Other fields of study that were determined were those of medicine, marine resources, agriculture, geology and many others that were decided by government to be the ones that would get funding immediately from government. As a result of this, institutions had or have no choice to make because government is the decision-making factor and the institutions are to follow all what government intends to do or plans to set in place. Shattock [7] has stated that the decisions are mainly made by the vice chancellors and the executives. It must be mentioned here that the vice chancellors and the executives of all three universities agree to the decisions of government since government is the major funder of tertiary education. It must also be mentioned that the government has a Ministry known as 'Ministry of Higher Education'. This ministry is responsible to ensure that tertiary

education in the country is given attention at its best. There is a budget that is given to this ministry to an amount of over N\$ 1 billion each year allocated to students pursuing this type of education in the country. The choices of courses that receive bursaries and grants are mainly those in the education, medicine, science, agriculture and mining. The onus rests in the government as the deciding factor as to which course is receiving first priority in funding and the universities must just follow that trend. Those students studying medicine are normally sent in South Africa and Russia. The rule is that all courses that are offered in Namibia should be done by the students who register to the universities. Students can only be allowed to go abroad for studies in specialised courses and not ordinary courses that are in Namibia. Policies are put in place that a student sponsored by government to go and study outside Namibia must be provided by a letter from the Namibian universities that such a course is not offered in Namibia and hence such a student is then legible to go and study abroad. Applications are scrutinised, visas applied for in cases of those countries that need visas to enter them. The duration of study is also stipulated. All logistics are done between the student and the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the country of study where the student is undertaking his or her studies. The law compels that after completion of such studies where a student was offered bursary or grant, the student will work for Namibia the years equivalent to his or her studies. If the student's course is slotted in a four year period after completion of his or her studies within those four years, she returns to Namibia and work in a government job for the period or number of years he or she studied.

Importantly, good governance is about accountability and efficiency and the relationships of tertiary institutions to each other, to government and to industries in the country. Tertiary institutions should also face the aspects and the challenge of training wise and compassionate leadership, and this should not only be at the political level but also in all sectors and all levels of Namibian society [24].

It is important to note that the problem of sustaining academic productivity in teaching and research, and maintaining confidence during trying times, cannot be solved by one individual academic staff member alone; but one that must be addressed through organisational changes in human resource policy, reward and performance management systems, and staff training and development inasmuch as possible Taylor [25].

As it is today, the number of student teacher enrolment has grown dramatically and very soon there would be a saturation point for teachers not getting the job in the market. This encouragement has however started to project that in five years' time, the teachers would be trained in a significant number and be over deployed, hence creating a situation where an employment rate.

It should be noteworthy here that academic institutions can benefit from scholarly and managerial work. As can be seen today, universities rely on managerial professionalism than they used to be in the past, and this is done in tandem with scholarly professionalism.

Sharrock [6] identifies at least three common sources of dysfunction and distress in universities in which he states the intractable conflicts that take place between those who identify with questions of institutional policy or strategy. In the past two decades there has been ample scope for this, as institutions around the world have adapted familiar and accepted ways of working to a new mixed global economy of higher learning, shaped by a particular confluence that revolves around a range of trends such as the following:

- Rapidly evolving, socially pervasive information and communication technologies;
- Rapidly expanding and often expensive new fields of disciplinary knowledge;
- Wider collaboration on 'third stream' projects with non-university organisations;
- Massive growth in domestic tertiary student numbers within national borders;
- More diverse types of tertiary institutions, courses of study and modes of learning;
- More intense competition among different public sector institutions for public funds;
- The emergence of rapidly growing international markets for cross-border study; and
- Wider, deeper, faster flows of information, ideas and techniques via global networks.

Research Methodology

The qualitative methodology has been the major contribution in this paper. Relevant information was explored to ensure that critical issues relating to this subject matter indeed, receive attention. Government plans for their role in tertiary institution management and support documentations were gathered and literature search predominantly acquired from this method [26].

Findings

It is perceived that government is playing a major role in tertiary education promotion due to the factors prevalent in the societies such as poverty, marginalisation of societies, affordability of tuition fees, the lack of private sector involvement in tertiary education promotion through sponsoring students to study in the fields of interests to the industries and the private sector. The government in all honesty felt that since Namibia lacked behind in terms of educating its people, the government should take a leading role in ensuring that its youth and those elderly that are able to learn further should continue. It is therefore recommended that:

- Government though so inspiring in funding should coordinate with other private sectors and stakeholders to work together in assisting the nation to educate itself where possible;
- The private sector which is not playing a significant role in supporting government in ensuring that the youth and the elderly who are interested in furthering their education go to universities should support these students financially;
- Marginalised communities or societies are prevalent in societies and are not all given opportunities to further their tertiary education;
- Poverty is prevalent and finding amicable solutions to it such as educating the nation is still an unachieved target;
- The private sectors should also help in identifying courses that are necessary in the industry and then sponsor such courses
- HIV/AIDS pandemic is a scourge that takes away given resources including skilled and competent human resources;

- It was also observed that crimes are high due to poverty as people have no access to job markets.

Recommendations

- Government should come up with a robust program that coordinates with other private sectors and stakeholders to work together in assisting the nation to educate itself where possible;
- The private sector should ensure playing a significant role in supporting government to ensure that the youth and the elderly who are interested in furthering their education are given financial support opportunities;
- A program that identifies marginalised communities or societies should be well-established and ensure that identified people are all given opportunities to further their tertiary education;
- The fact that poverty is prevalent and finding amicable solutions to it such as educating the nation is still an unachieved target;
- The government should ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS are identified and given equal opportunities like any of the other members in society;
- Preventive health care should be emphasized to minimize the spread of the HIV/AIDS through new cases in a way maintain the non-losing of skilled and competent human resources;

Conclusion

The paper assessed and analysed the Public Sector's involvement and management support in tertiary institutions of Africa. The paper explored poverty as a negative impact on students wishing to further their education. The paper discovered that the government decided to provide courses such as educational diploma or degree which should be used as entry requirements for any teacher. It was revealed in this paper that in Namibia, students receive a course in education at tertiary level freely. The government commits itself to paying for students and that after they had completed their tertiary education; they would be offered educational appointments as teachers. The paper also revealed that supporting marginalised groups is one of the key challenges the government is facing in terms of resources and that the role of the private sector is minimal. Furthermore, the paper discovered that there is a failure of tertiary institutions to stand on their own. The government has been labelled as sanctioning of types of courses that should be offered at tertiary institutions and that the formula of funding by the state should be the guiding principle. The paper applied qualitative research methodology and levelled key findings and recommendations possible to resolve these aspects.

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