
SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Peer Reviewed Book Chapter

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7

CHALLENGES MILITATING AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA.

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the challenges militating against the development of tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Despite the symbolic status of Abuja as Nigeria's administrative capital and its concentration of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, the performance of these institutions continues to be constrained by structural, administrative, and systemic problems. Adopting a qualitative review approach, the paper identifies seven key challenges: inadequate funding, infrastructural decay, shortage of qualified academic staff, unstable education policies, insecurity within and around campuses, weak governance structures, and frequent industrial actions. The analysis draws from empirical studies and policy reports to demonstrate how these constraints undermine teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and institutional sustainability. The paper concludes that without coordinated reforms in funding, governance, and policy stability, tertiary education in the FCT will continue to experience declining efficiency and reduced global competitiveness.

Keywords: Tertiary institutions, FCT Abuja, higher education, funding, governance, Nigeria

7.0. Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a vital instrument for national development, social transformation, technological advancement, and economic growth. At the tertiary level, education plays a strategic role in the production of skilled manpower, generation of knowledge through research, and promotion of innovation needed for sustainable national progress.

Tertiary institutions, which include universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, are established to provide advanced teaching, professional training, research, and community services that contribute to the overall development of society. In Nigeria, tertiary education occupies a significant position because it prepares high-level human resources required for administration, industry, science, technology, healthcare, and national governance.

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, occupies a unique position in the Nigerian educational system due to its status as the administrative capital of the country. Abuja hosts several public and private tertiary institutions that attract students, researchers, academic staff, and policymakers from different parts of Nigeria and beyond. The presence of these institutions is expected to promote educational excellence, research productivity, manpower development, and socio-economic advancement within the territory and the nation at large. Institutions located in the FCT are also expected to serve as models of quality education because of their proximity to federal ministries, educational agencies, and national policymakers.

Despite these expectations, the development of tertiary institutions in the FCT continues to face numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness and growth. Over the years, concerns have been raised regarding declining educational standards, inadequate learning facilities, poor research output, shortage of qualified academic personnel, and unstable academic calendars in many Nigerian tertiary institutions, including those located in Abuja. These challenges have negatively affected the capacity of institutions to achieve their mandates effectively. The increasing demand for higher education in Nigeria has further placed enormous pressure on existing facilities and institutional resources within the FCT. However, despite their strategic location in the nation's capital, many tertiary institutions in the FCT face persistent developmental challenges. These challenges have negatively affected their ability to deliver quality teaching, conduct impactful research, and engage in meaningful community service. This chapter therefore critically examines these constraints within a review framework, highlighting their implications for tertiary education development in FCT, Nigeria.

7.1. Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Tertiary Institutions

The concept of tertiary institutions has been widely discussed in educational literature, with scholars providing various but related definitions that emphasize higher learning, skill development, and research functions. UNESCO (2008) defined tertiary institutions as post-secondary education systems that include universities, colleges, polytechnics, and other institutions that provide advanced academic and professional training beyond secondary education. Okebukola (2015) described tertiary institutions as organized educational establishments that provide higher-level manpower training aimed at producing graduates equipped with knowledge, skills, and competencies for national development. World Bank (2010) conceptualized tertiary education institutions as formal post-secondary learning institutions responsible for teaching, research, and innovation that contribute to economic growth and social transformation.



Ezeani (2016) viewed tertiary institutions as centres of higher learning that offer specialized academic and vocational programmes designed to prepare individuals for professional careers and leadership roles in society. Tertiary education is the level of learning after secondary school where individuals acquire specialized knowledge and skills for careers, research, and personal development. Tertiary education is the level of learning that comes after secondary school. It includes universities, polytechnics, colleges, and other institutions where people gain specialized knowledge, skills, and qualifications in a particular field. Unlike basic schooling, tertiary education focuses on preparing learners for a career, critical thinking, research, and personal growth (Ogunode, 2026). The objectives of Tertiary Education includes;

1. To equip students with practical and theoretical skills they need for their chosen careers. It's not just about reading books; it's about learning how to apply knowledge in real-life situations. For example, engineers learn to build, doctors learn to treat, and teachers learn to inspire.
2. To train students to think deeply and analyze situations critically. This means not just accepting information, but questioning it, evaluating evidence, and making informed decisions skills you'll use every day, both at work and in life.
3. To shape character, values, and ethics. It encourages students to become responsible citizens who can make moral decisions, respect diversity, and contribute positively to society.
4. To foster research, creativity, and innovation, helping students and faculty to find solutions to societal problems, improve technology, and advance knowledge.
5. To prepare graduates to serve society and contribute to national development. By producing skilled professionals, innovators, and leaders, tertiary institutions help build stronger communities and a more prosperous nation (Ogunode, 2026).

7.2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES MILITATING AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN FCT, ABUJA

i. Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding remains one of the major challenges affecting the development of tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Tertiary institutions require sufficient financial resources to provide quality teaching, research, infrastructural facilities, staff welfare, and community services. However, many institutions in the FCT continue to experience poor funding from government authorities, internally generated revenue constraints, and limited support from private stakeholders. This situation has negatively affected the overall growth and performance of higher education institutions within the territory. Funding is the financial backbone of every educational institution because it determines the extent to which educational goals and objectives can be achieved. According to Babalola (2019), adequate funding is necessary for effective administration, provision of facilities, staff motivation, and academic excellence in higher institutions. When institutions are underfunded, many aspects of academic



activities suffer. One of the major effects of inadequate funding in tertiary institutions in FCT, Abuja is the deterioration of infrastructural facilities. Many institutions face shortages of lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, hostels, workshops, and office spaces. Existing facilities are often poorly maintained because there are insufficient funds for renovation and expansion. In some institutions, students study in overcrowded classrooms while laboratory equipment remains outdated and inadequate for practical learning. This affects the quality of teaching and learning and reduces students' academic performance. According to Okebukola (2015), Nigerian universities suffer chronic underfunding, which has resulted in declining academic quality and weakened global competitiveness. In the FCT, institutions such as the University of Abuja and other federal tertiary institutions rely heavily on government subventions that are often delayed and insufficient. For example, capital projects such as lecture theatres, laboratories, and hostels are frequently abandoned due to budgetary shortfalls. This situation forces institutions to operate beyond capacity, thereby compromising quality assurance. World Bank (2018) further emphasizes that underinvestment in higher education in developing countries leads to weak innovation systems and low economic productivity.

ii. Infrastructural Deficits

Inadequate infrastructural facilities constitute one of the major challenges militating against the development of tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Infrastructure such as lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, hostels, workshops, information and communication technology facilities, electricity, water supply, and transportation systems are essential for effective teaching, learning, and research. Ogunode (2022) noted that many tertiary institutions in the FCT face serious infrastructural deficiencies due to increasing student population and poor maintenance culture. In several institutions, classrooms are overcrowded, laboratory equipment is outdated, and hostel accommodation is insufficient for students. These poor conditions create an un conducive learning environment that negatively affects students' academic performance and staff productivity (Aiyedun, Olatunde-Aiyedun, & Ogunode, 2021). Inadequate infrastructure also limits the ability of institutions to conduct quality research and practical training, thereby reducing the standard of higher education. The poor state of facilities discourages innovation, lowers institutional reputation, and hinders the achievement of educational objectives in tertiary institutions within Abuja. UNESCO (2017) notes that modern higher education requires functional laboratories, ICT infrastructure, libraries, and adequate student accommodation. In Abuja institutions, overcrowded lecture halls and poorly equipped laboratories are common features. For instance, students in science-based disciplines often struggle with limited access to laboratory equipment, which affects practical learning outcomes. Hostel shortages also force students to live off-campus in overcrowded and sometimes unsafe environments. These infrastructural gaps directly reduce the quality of graduates produced and limit institutional research capacity (Anyira, & Imade, 2020; Ati, 2017).

iii. Shortage of Qualified Academic Staff



The shortage of qualified academic staff is another serious challenge affecting the development of tertiary institutions in FCT, Abuja. Qualified lecturers are essential for delivering quality education, supervising research, mentoring students, and promoting academic excellence. However, many tertiary institutions experience inadequate staffing because of poor remuneration, brain drain, limited opportunities for professional development, and increasing migration of lecturers to private institutions or foreign countries in search of better working conditions. As a result, existing lecturers are often overloaded with teaching, administrative, and research responsibilities (Azenabor, 2022). This excessive workload reduces teaching effectiveness and limits adequate interaction between lecturers and students. In some departments, institutions rely heavily on part-time or visiting lecturers who may not fully contribute to institutional growth and continuity. The shortage of competent academic staff also weakens research productivity and innovation, thereby affecting the overall quality and competitiveness of tertiary education in Abuja. Ezeani (2016) argues that brain drain is a significant factor, as many Nigerian academics migrate to Europe, North America, and other African countries in search of better working conditions. In the FCT, some departments operate with a limited number of professors and senior lecturers, leading to excessive workload for existing staff. This affects lecture delivery, student supervision, and research productivity. In some cases, Daniel-Kalio, (2019) observed that institutions rely on adjunct or visiting lecturers, which weakens continuity in academic programmes. The implication is a reduced capacity for mentorship and academic excellence.

iv. Policy Instability in Education

Policy inconsistency has continued to undermine the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2011), frequent changes in education policies disrupt planning and implementation processes in higher institutions. In the FCT, institutions often face sudden changes in admission policies, curriculum structures, and funding frameworks introduced by regulatory bodies without adequate consultation. For example, shifts in admission quotas or programme accreditation guidelines often create confusion and delays in academic planning. Such instability affects institutional autonomy and weakens long-term strategic development (Emiko, 2023; Ifeyinwa & Okemute, 2023).

v. Insecurity Challenges

Insecurity has become a major obstacle to the development of tertiary institutions in the FCT, Abuja. Although Abuja serves as the capital city of Nigeria, security threats such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cult-related violence, cybercrime, and occasional terrorist attacks have created fear among students, staff, and administrators. Insecurity disrupts academic activities, affects concentration, and reduces the confidence of parents and stakeholders in the educational system. Students living off-campus are particularly vulnerable to criminal activities due to inadequate security measures in surrounding communities (Ishaya & Ogunode, 2021). In some cases, insecurity forces institutions to spend substantial financial resources on security arrangements instead of academic development projects. The fear of attacks and violence



according to Marks, (2017) also discourages international collaborations, research partnerships, and foreign student enrollment. Consequently, insecurity negatively affects the stability, reputation, and smooth functioning of tertiary institutions in the FCT. Federal Ministry of Education (2020) reports that insecurity in educational environments reduces academic productivity and increases anxiety among staff and students. Incidents such as theft, cult-related activities, and occasional external threats around campuses create a sense of vulnerability. In some cases, students avoid evening lectures or library use due to safety concerns. This negatively affects academic engagement and campus life. Insecurity also discourages foreign academic partnerships and exchange programmes.

vi. Poor Governance and Administrative Inefficiency

Poor governance and administrative inefficiency significantly hinder the development of tertiary institutions in Abuja. Effective governance in higher education involves transparency, accountability, proper planning, policy implementation, and efficient management of institutional resources. However, some tertiary institutions experience problems such as corruption, favoritism, mismanagement of funds, poor leadership, and lack of accountability. Administrative inefficiency often results in delays in decision-making, poor implementation of educational policies, and inability to address institutional challenges promptly (Mc Cowan, Janmaat, & Rao, 2016). In some institutions, resources meant for infrastructural development, staff welfare, and research activities are either diverted or poorly utilized. Poor governance also creates conflicts between management, staff unions, and students, leading to instability within institutions. The absence of effective leadership weakens institutional growth, reduces educational quality, and limits the ability of tertiary institutions to achieve their mandates in teaching, research, and community service. Nwafor and Okoli (2019) observe that weak leadership and bureaucratic inefficiencies significantly reduce the performance of Nigerian universities. In some tertiary institutions in Abuja, decision-making processes are slow due to excessive bureaucracy. Procurement delays, poor financial management systems, and weak accountability structures hinder project execution. In some cases, leadership appointments are influenced by political considerations rather than merit, affecting institutional stability. Effective governance is therefore essential for institutional development.

vii. Frequent Industrial Actions

Frequent industrial actions by staff unions remain a persistent challenge militating against the development of tertiary institutions in the FCT, Abuja. Ogunode, (2020) opined Unions such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities, the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions often embark on strikes to demand improved funding, better salaries, enhanced working conditions, and implementation of agreements with government authorities. These industrial actions according to Ogunode, and Adamu, (2021) disrupt academic calendars, delay examinations and graduation, and negatively affect students' academic progress. Frequent strikes also contribute to loss of learning time, decline in research activities, and reduction in



the quality of education offered by tertiary institutions. Students may become frustrated and lose motivation due to prolonged academic interruptions (Ogunode, Kasimu, & Ibrahim, 2023). In addition, industrial disputes damage the reputation of institutions and reduce public confidence in the Nigerian higher education system. The continuous occurrence of strikes therefore poses a serious threat to sustainable educational development in tertiary institutions across the FCT, Abuja. ASUU strikes and related labour actions often disrupt academic calendars for extended periods. UNESCO (2020) warns that prolonged academic disruptions reduce learning quality, delay graduation timelines, and affect institutional credibility. In FCT institutions, repeated strikes have led to loss of academic sessions, forcing students to spend more years in school than necessary.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has established that tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, face multidimensional challenges that hinder their development and performance. These challenges include inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, shortage of qualified staff, unstable policies, insecurity, poor governance, and frequent industrial actions. Collectively, these issues weaken institutional capacity and reduce the global competitiveness of Nigeria's higher education system. Based on the findings, the chapter recommends the followings:

- 1) Government should significantly increase budgetary allocation to tertiary education and ensure timely disbursement of funds.
- 2) Institutions should prioritize infrastructure renewal, including ICT modernization, laboratories, and student housing.
- 3) Attractive remuneration and incentive systems should be implemented to retain qualified academic staff and reduce brain drain.
- 4) Education policies should be stable, consultative, and long-term oriented to support institutional planning.
- 5) Campus security should be strengthened through collaboration with security agencies and investment in surveillance systems.
- 6) Institutional governance should be reformed to promote transparency, accountability, and merit-based leadership selection.
- 7) A sustainable industrial relations framework should be established to reduce strikes through continuous dialogue and binding agreements.

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Concluding Synthesis

This volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria* contributes significantly to contemporary discourse on educational transformation by examining the policies, practices, innovations, and challenges shaping the Nigerian educational landscape. The chapters collectively demonstrate that sustainable education extends beyond improving access to schooling; it encompasses the creation of resilient, inclusive, equitable, and future-oriented learning systems capable of responding effectively to socio-economic, technological, and environmental changes.

A synthesis of the contributions reveals that sustainable education in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that integrates governance reforms, technological advancement, infrastructure development, teacher capacity building, curriculum modernization, and stakeholder engagement. The studies presented in this volume underscore the importance of aligning educational policies with national development priorities while ensuring responsiveness to global educational trends and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The volume highlights the transformative potential of digital technologies in expanding educational opportunities, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, learning management systems, educational data analytics, and digital content delivery platforms, present opportunities to improve teaching effectiveness, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency. However, their successful implementation depends on reliable infrastructure, adequate funding, digital literacy, and supportive policy frameworks.

The contributions further identify persistent challenges confronting the Nigerian education sector, including inadequate funding, infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, policy discontinuity, regional disparities, insecurity, and socio-economic inequalities. These interconnected challenges continue to undermine educational quality and limit the realization of sustainable development objectives.

Importantly, the volume repositions education as a strategic instrument for national development, social mobility, economic competitiveness, innovation, and nation-building. Sustainable education is presented not merely as a sectoral concern but as a foundational pillar for achieving broader national aspirations, including poverty reduction, employment generation, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

Ultimately, this volume advances scholarly understanding and policy discussions by offering multidisciplinary perspectives and evidence-based insights into the future of education in Nigeria. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, educational leaders, development

practitioners, and other stakeholders committed to fostering educational systems that are resilient, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the collective findings and recommendations presented throughout this volume, the following strategic implications are proposed for policymakers, educational administrators, practitioners, researchers, and development partners:

Policy Reform and Strategic Governance

Governments at federal, state, and local levels should strengthen educational governance through evidence-based policymaking, institutional accountability, policy continuity, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Sustainable educational development requires long-term planning that transcends political transitions and administrative changes.

Digital Transformation and Technology Integration

There is an urgent need to expand investments in educational technology infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital learning resources, and teacher digital competencies. Schools and higher education institutions should leverage emerging technologies to improve access, instructional quality, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency.

Sustainable Education Financing

Alternative and innovative funding mechanisms should complement public expenditure on education. Public-private partnerships, donor-supported initiatives, educational endowments, corporate social responsibility investments, and community participation can contribute to sustainable financing and improved educational outcomes.

Teacher Development and Professional Capacity Building

Continuous professional development should become an integral component of educational reform. Teachers must be equipped with contemporary pedagogical skills, technological competencies, research capabilities, and learner-centered instructional approaches necessary for twenty-first-century education.

Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Educational policies and interventions should prioritize disadvantaged populations, including learners in rural communities, girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and

economically vulnerable groups. Sustainable education requires ensuring that no learner is excluded from quality educational opportunities.

Research, Innovation, and Data-Driven Decision Making

Educational institutions should strengthen research culture and promote evidence-based decision-making. Reliable educational data systems are essential for planning, resource allocation, performance assessment, and policy evaluation.

Infrastructure Development and Learning Environment Improvement

Governments and stakeholders should prioritize investments in school infrastructure, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, digital facilities, sanitation systems, and renewable energy solutions. Safe and conducive learning environments are critical for educational sustainability.

Institutional Resilience and Crisis Preparedness

Educational systems should develop adaptive capacities to withstand disruptions arising from pandemics, economic crises, natural disasters, and security challenges. Flexible learning models, blended education approaches, and emergency response frameworks should be integrated into educational planning.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The sustainable transformation of education in Nigeria requires collaborative engagement among government agencies, educational institutions, private sector organizations, civil society groups, communities, and international development partners. Effective partnerships can mobilize resources, expertise, and innovation necessary for long-term educational advancement.

Editors' Note

The editors are pleased to present this volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria*, a scholarly contribution designed to address critical issues shaping the future of education within the country.

We express our sincere gratitude to the contributing authors whose research and professional insights have enriched this publication. Their diverse perspectives provide valuable understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and emerging trends influencing educational development in Nigeria.

We also acknowledge the dedicated efforts of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional partners whose commitment to academic excellence has enhanced the quality, credibility, and relevance of this volume. Their contributions have ensured that the publication meets the highest standards of scholarly rigor and professional integrity.

This volume is intended to serve not only as an academic resource but also as a practical guide for policymakers, educational leaders, practitioners, researchers, and development organizations seeking innovative solutions to contemporary educational challenges.

It is our hope that the ideas, findings, and recommendations presented herein will stimulate further research, inform policy formulation, encourage collaboration, and inspire transformative action toward building an educational system that is equitable, innovative, resilient, and sustainable.

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