# CONSTRAINTS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN RIVERS NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The study aimed at determining the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes was carried out, with emphasis on the six higher institutions in Rivers State. The sample consisted of 450 academic and administrative staff from the rank of Deans, Heads of Departments and Senior Lecturers. The sample was selected by simple random sampling technique from a population of 750 unit heads. A 30-item questionnaire captioned Deans, Heads of Department and Senior Lecturers Assessment Questionnaire (DHDSLAQ) was used to collect data from participants. Mean score and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while the Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at P-value of 0.05 or 5% level of significance. The result of the study revealed among others that inadequacy of funds, planning without accurate statistical data, political influence, and misappropriation of funds and shortage of qualified manpower were major constraints. The findings also revealed that there were significant difference between male and female unit heads on the perception of constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that both state and federal government should disburse enough money to education sector as to enable educational planners and other professionals in planning to carry out their job effectively.

**Keywords:** Higher education, planning and implementation, constraints, programmes

**Introduction**

In planning higher education, fore-sight must be applied to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of educational system in serving social, political and economic interest of the society. When the educational system is not functioning well, as in the case of Rivers State in Nigeria, the net effect is high rate of drop out, mass failure in public exams and general wastage of human and material resources. These changes call for a systematic plan.

In respect of higher educational planning in a developing nation such as Nigeria, the 1970s witnessed exceptional expansion in higher education and crawling development which necessitates the need for new infrastructural development. With the creation of more states in Nigeria, some states have only some isolated facilities or schools which they hope to or have already merged to form a university, polytechnic, college of education and other forms of higher institutions. In many instances, the physical plans for these existing institutions are assistance provided by developed nations. The facilities comprise of impressive structures which tend to be more expensive and sometimes more of the culture of the donor than of the culture which the institution is intended to serve due to lack of proper planning.

The present expansion of higher education in most developing counties is not being achieved with greater reliance on their own initiative and their own resources. Higher education institutions in most developing nations like Nigeria turn to foreign firms for help in planning and architectural design. This development brings with it a new realism of planning higher education when a country which is already short of resources is faced with comparing the benefits of an expanded higher education programmes against the cost, it may well decide to shelve plans for higher education expansion. It can also be noted that in Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State this comparison along with a close analysis of manpower needs has already caused major shift away from academic education.

However, a desire to integrate the higher institutions into a broader and more complex higher education system places a premium on training people, who will be able to contribute to the economic, political and social development of the nation. Historically, the Ashby report of (1962) formed the pillar since that period Nigeria has embarked on series of plans on higher education. Coming to Rivers State, their development plan of 1991-1995 with respect to higher education was targeted at the provision of enough physical structures such as hostels, lecture halls and adequate facilitates in all tertiary institutions. Though, they were built and commissioned, but they were inadequate to cope with the students population explosion of those institutions. The law faculty of the Rivers State University of Science and

Technology, which was planned to be situated at Buguma never materialized due to failure in implementation. Though it is believed that one of the problems higher education sector faces in Nigeria bothers mostly on liability to convert policy statements to concrete terms. Educational plan may look impressive on paper but in practice becomes unworkable at the implementation stage or level.

Uche (1995) emphasized that educational planning in developing nations such as Nigeria and Rivers State in particular are handicapped due to shortages of the required personnel and also by the appalling lack of adequate data. Sharing a common frame of reference, McGinn (1989) highlighted his Latin America experiences and pointed out that educational reforms are littered with nationalistic plans…in which ingenious and sometimes radical proposal for change were carefully laid out in advance and then never implemented. This is similar to what has happened in Rivers State where higher education plans are designed, but never implemented.

To give credence to this Adesina (1997) asserts that educational planning as in most fields of human edeavour, where good intensions are of little value unless they are supported by resources (human and material) to make the plans work. What appears paramount in Adesina's assertion was the provision of human assets which ought to be maintained and sustained. He sees the overall development of Nigeria as a nation as conspicuously being handicapped by shortage of specialized manpower. He therefore, recommended that skilled manpower should be provided for educational planning. Thus, most of the higher education programmes in the country, which were in the third national development plan, could not be implemented during political era because of inadequate manpower.

UNESCO (1999) on the same constraints to education plan and implementation, maintains that it revolves around planning of infrastructural development, human resource and facilities for higher education. Therefore, it is observed that during volatile economic periods, it may be necessary to re-examine resources annually, and adjust higher education policy accordingly. The body highlighted the constraint of manpower to planning and implementation of higher education programmes in terms of the following:

- number of Nigeria nationals who could be attracted to university teaching from private and public sector.
- number of nationals abroad who could be persuaded to return.
- number of expatiates who could be recruited considering the available financial resources.

Thus, the success of educational plan depends essentially on adequate supply of skilled manpower at both the planning and implementation stage.

However, the implementation of higher education scheme in Rivers State provides good illustration of educational planning and politics. Educational plan per say is not a document with detailed programme religiously implemented. Naturally, a plan should be subject to modification. In the light of the experiences gained during the implementation process, an education plan could be modified to conform with the socio-economic trends. Usually allocations are made to approved plans during the annual budget. In effect, only the plans that are adequately funded stand the chance of being fully and effectively implemented. During the oil boom era, not all the plans that were funded were fully implemented because of one reason or the other. With galloping inflation, followed closely by oil glut, most education plans that could not be funded, were either deferred, or drastically overhauled and contracted. Thompson (2002) is of the opinion that whatever educational institutions have contributed to development, integrated planning and careful discussion have been found. Thus, for a programme to succeed there must be well worked out and carefully elaborated plan.

In the same vein, the presence of competent, dynamic and committed leadership is critical and decisive factor when it comes to implementing educational programmes. He concluded that, its absence has thwarted the achievement of what may have been worthy objective, and this element is very evident in Ahamadu Bello University Zaria in Nigeria (ABU). The present situation and its impact on planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State constitute the main problem. From these consideration, the basic concern of these study therefore bothers on the constraints encountered by planners and implementers of higher education programmes.

**Purpose of the Study**

Educational plans of developing nations such as Nigeria are faced with serious difficulties during the process of implementation. Due to such short comings the quantitative goals set forth have little hope of being achieved. It is quite imperative to investigate the constraints in planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State. To achieve this purpose effectively the following research questions were posed:

1.	What are the perceptions of male and female unit heads on constraints to planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State?

2.      What are the strategies adopted by academic and administrative unit heads on the planning and implementation of Higher education programmes?

3.      What problems do academic administrators encounter in planning and implementation of higher educational programmes?

**Method**

Participants: The population of the study was all 750 unit heads in the six higher institutions in Rivers State. These are: University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Rivers State University of Science and Technology Nkpolu, Federal College of Education (Tech) Omoku, State College of Education Rumuolumeni, Bori Polytechnic and College of Arts and Science Rumuola Port Harcourt, using simple random sampling technique by balloting. The selection gave a sample size of 450 unit heads in the six higher institutions used for the study, representing 60% of the population. The unit heads were used as respondents for the study.

Instrumentation: To carry out this study, a 30 item closed-ended questionnaire entitled constraints of planning and implementation of higher education programme assessment questionnaire was developed and administered to 750 unit-heads.

Questions were developed to probe the following areas.

1)      Perception of male and female unit heads on the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes in Rivers State.

2)      Strategies which should be adopted by unit heads in planning and implementation of higher education programmes

3)      Problems encountered by academic unit heads in planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

Procedures: The researchers administered the instrument personally.

Data analysis: Descriptive statistics using mean, mean set and standard deviations were used to analyze the data from the research questions. The Z-test was used to analyze the hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What are the perception of male and female unit heads on the constraints to planning and implementation of higher educational programmes.

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviations on the perception of male and female unit heads on constraints planning and implementation of higher educational programmes.

| S/N | Perception of male and female | Male | | Female | | Mean Set (N) | Criterion mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | MEAN | S.D | MEAN | S.D | | |
| 1. | Insufficient fund to education system | 3.33 | 1.82 | 2.98 | 1.69 | 3.16 | 2.5 |
| 2. | Political interference is the most limiting factor in planning and implementation of higher education programmes | 2.98 | 1.69 | 3.15 | 1.74 | 3.07 | |
| 3. | Lack of clear-cut political ideology in formulation of educational programmes | 2.84 | 1.68 | 2.98 | 1.72 | 2.91 | |
| 4. | Shortage of qualified manpower in educational system | 2.88 | 1.69 | 3.05 | 1.74 | 2.97 | |
| 5. | Diversion of funds meant for higher education programmes | 2.98 | 1.69 | 3.09 | 1.74 | 3.04 | |
| 6. | Lack of proper incentives to education staff | 1.94 | 1.38 | 2.13 | 1.39 | 2.04 | |
| 7. | Inconsistency in educational system | 1.38 | 1.17 | 2.44 | 1.55 | 1.91 | |
| 8. | Over-reliance on educational assistance to fund education programmes | 2.00 | 1.40 | 2.18 | 1.44 | 2.09 | |

| 9. | Incessant strike action in higher education system | 2.12 | 1.44 | 2.46 | 1.59 | 2.34 | |
| 10. | Inaccurate statistical data in planning and implementation of higher educational programmes. | 3.08 | 1.75 | 2.96 | 1.74 | 3.02 | |

Criterion mean        =        2.5

As clearly indicated in the mean scores, the male and female unit heads are of the view that insufficient fund, political interference, lack of clear cut ideology, shortage of qualified manpower, diversion of funds and inaccurate statistical data are constraints to planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State. The table also shows that insufficient fund has the highest mean response of 3.16 closely followed by political interference 3.07 and diversion of funds 3.04, in accurate statistical data 3.02, shortage of manpower 2.97 and 1.72, and then lack of clear cut political ideology 2.91.

Variable 6, 7, 8 and 9 showed low mean scores of 2.04, 1.91, 2.09 and 2.34 respectively. That is a strong indication that such constraints are rarely perceived. As shown in Table 1, incessant strike actions were high in female compared to male. However, perceptions on the constraints such as insufficient fund, political interference, lack of clear-cut political ideology, inaccurate data and diversion of funds are adjudged higher in female with higher mean scores compared to male which gave lower average value in each variable except in items 1 and 10 in each of the variable investigated.

**Research Question Two**

What are the strategies adopted by academic and administrative unit heads in planning and implementation of higher educational programmes?

| S/N | Strategies adopted | Academic | | Administrative | | Mean Set (N) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | **MEAN** | **S.D** | **MEAN** | **S.D** | |
| 11. | Proper legislation on educational matters | 3.22 | 1.78 | 3.20 | 1.77 | 3.21 |

| 12. | Adopting information and communication technology in educational programmes | 2.87 | 1.68 | 2.70 | 1.63 | 2.79 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 13. | Employing qualified and skilled manpower in educational system | 2.76 | 1.65 | 2.60 | 1.62 | 2.68 |
| 14. | Planning with accurate data in educational programmes | 3.18 | 1.75 | 3.02 | 1.73 | 3.10 |
| 15. | Proper utilization of available infrastructure assigned for each educational programme | 2.23 | 1.57 | 2.47 | 1.57 | 2.5 |
| 16. | Attracting external assistance in funding educational programmes | 1.38 | 1.15 | 2.44 | 1.55 | 1.91 |
| 17. | Encouraging exchange programmes in academic | 2.13 | 1.39 | 1.94 | 1.38 | 2.04 |
| 18. | Proper use of educational funds | 3.18 | 1.74 | 2.87 | 1.69 | 3.03 |
| 19. | Adequate encouragement and incentives to staff | 2.17 | 1.08 | 1.38 | 1.15 | 1.78 |
| 20. | Consistency in education programmes | 2.00 | 1.25 | 2.33 | 1.54 | 2.17 |

Creation mean        =        2.5

Table II shows that both academic and administrative heads are of the same view that proper legislation on educational matters, qualified and skilled manpower, accurate data, information and communication technology, proper use of educational funds and proper utilization of available infrastructure are strategies adopted in planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State.

The table also indicates that proper legislation on educational matters has the highest mean response of 3.21, followed by accurate statistical data of 3.1, proper use of educational

funds 3.03, information and communication technologies 2.79, manpower 2.68 and utilization of available infrastructure 2.5.

On variable 16, 17 and 19 academic unit heads showed low mean scores of 1.38, 2.13 and 2.00 while administrative unit heads records mean scores of 2.44, 1.94, 2.17 respectively. This indicates that such strategies like legislation, information and communication technologies, qualified and skilled manpower, utilization of available infrastructure, proper use of educational funds and accurate data were relatively high.

**Research Question Three**

What are the problems encountered by academic administrators (Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments, and Lecturers) in planning and implementation of higher education programmes?

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviation on the problems encountered by academic administrators in planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

| S/N | Problem encountered | Deans | | H.O.D's | | Lecturers | | Mean Set (N) |
|-----|---------------------|-------|-----|---------|-----|-----------|-----|------|
|     |                     | MEAN | S.D | MEAN | S.D | MEAN | S.D |      |
| 21. | Inadequacy of fund affect planning and implementation of educational programmes | 3.77 | 0.90 | 3.04 | 3.90 | 3.04 | 0.98 | 3.28 |
| 22. | Over estimation of anticipated financial resources to fund programmes | 2.60 | 0.89 | 2.19 | 0.97 | 2.22 | 0.99 | 2.34 |
| 23. | Planning without basic | 3.40 | 0.88 | 3.06 | 0.98 | 3.04 | 0.99 | 3.17 |

| | statistical data | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. | No regular workshops conferences, and seminars on development of higher education | 1.43 | 0.73 | 2.18 | 0.97 | 2.73 | 0.98 | 2.11 |
| 25. | Extreme rigidity of decisions in higher education programmes | 1.57 | 0.89 | 2.13 | 0.89 | 2.23 | 0.98 | 1.98 |
| 26 | Political interference of the political ruling class on higher education programmes | 3.77 | 0.91 | 2.96 | 0.96 | 3.00 | 0.98 | 3.04 |
| 27 | Inadequate educational funding | 3.77 | 0.90 | 3.04 | 0.97 | 3.04 | 0.98 | 3.28 |
| 28 | Misappropriation of available educational fund | 1.49 | 0.98 | 1.67 | 0.88 | 2.79 | 0.98 | 2.04 |
| 29 | Unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks too | 1.71 | 0.98 | 1.93 | 0.69 | 2.78 | 0.98 | 2.14 |
| 30 | Shortage of qualified manpower | 3.13 | 0.91 | 3.05 | 0.96 | 3.04 | 0.99 | 3.07 |

Criterion mean          =          2.5

The mean score in the Table 3 reveals that most problems militating against proper planning and implementation of higher education programmes are funding. This is evidenced by the high mean of 3.28 recorded by items 1 and 7, and followed closely by basic statistical data, with mean score of 3.17, political interference 3.04, and shortage of manpower 3.07. The table therefore shows that Deans of faculties, Heads of departments and other Lecturers have similar perceptions towards the constraints on planning and implementation of higher education programmes in Rivers State.

Variable 21, 23, 26, 27 and 30 academic administrators (Deans. Heads of Departments and Lecturers) recorded high mean scores which indicates other agreement that inadequate fund, planning without basic statistical data, political interference are some of the major problem encountered.

**Hypotheses I**

There is no significance difference between the perception of male and female unit heads on the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

Mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between male and female unit heads on their perception on constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

| S/N | CATEGORIES | CASES | MEAN | SD | COMPUTED Z | CRITERION Z |
|-----|------------|-------|------|------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Male | 235 | 26.32 | 16.23 | | |
| 2 | Female | 215 | 29.28 | 17.26 | -1.56 | -1.96 |

The computed Z value of 1.56 is greater than the critical Z value of - 1.96. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between male and female unit heads in their perception on constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes was rejected.

**Hypotheses Two**

There is no significant difference between the academic unit heads and administrative unit heads on the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

Mean, standard deviation, and Z-test of difference between academic and administrative unit heads on the strategies adopted on planning and implementation.

| S/N | CATEGORIES | CASES | MEAN | SD | COMPUTED Z | CRITERION Z |
|-----|-----------|-------|------|-----|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Academic | 235 | 28.74 | 16.81 | | |
| 2 | Administrative | 215 | 26.68 | 16.08 | -1.07 | -1.69 |

**Discussion**

The present study has shown that both male and female unit heads are of the view that finance, politics, statistical data and manpower are constraints to planning and implementation of higher educational programmes in Rivers State. Finance as a constraint to planning and implementation to planning and implementation recorded a high mean score of 3.01. Thus, this finding is in agreement with the work of Neave (1982) which observes that socio economic constraints affect higher education in a variety of ways. According to him these constraints makes it more difficult for higher education programmes to meet up with the needs of people because funds are not readily available for the implementation of well articulated proposed plans. However, politics as a constraint to plan implementation indicated a high score value 3.01 which simply imply that political interference plays a major role. Appointment into strategic decision making levels in educational planning and implementation is highly politicized. As a result people who do not possess the technical competence to plan find themselves occupying such technically demanding positions, either because of political lineage or the political order of the bureaucratic civil service. Even when the right persons are placed by the political decision-makers, political considerations/interest in most cases take upper hand over technical and more rational decisions as a way of sustaining the political good will of those in power. The above observation is consistent with Adesina (1982) and Agabi (1999) who reported that political constraints on planning and implementation at any level of education arise from politicization of knowledge by political leaders in power. Even in situations where technical planers try to prove the rational superiority of their decisions, there has been evidence of arbitrary use of political power to impose socio-political decisions over others.

Another finding of the study is that there is shortage of accurate statistical data. This is in agreement with the work of Agabi (1990), Ross and Mahlck (1990) which reported that in some countries like Nigeria, Malasia and Indonesia data relating to ethnicity, religion and

such politically volatile variables are never analysed and published, even when collected. Sometimes the data collected are unreliable due to inappropriate collection which makes it factually wrong and misleading. At times they are deliberately falsified to reflect a particular education bias. Thus, this implies that availability of adequate and accurate data are essential factors in planning and implementation of higher education programmes in Rivers State.

This study also revealed that improper legislation is a strong constraint to planning and implementation of higher education programmes and recorded a mean of 3.21. The finding is in line with Thompson (1999) who asserted that whenever educational institutions have contributed to integrated planning; careful preparation and discussion will be reached, thus, for a programme to succeed there must be a well worked out and carefully elaborated plan and deliberation. This implies that proper legislation on educational matters influences planning and implementation.

From the study it was also revealed that judicious use of funds allocated to higher education, which recorded 3.03 will go along way to cushion the effect of constraints encountered at the planning and implementation of higher education programmes in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with the National Policy on Education (2004) which observes that Education is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government. Therefore provision of finance and adequate management is an indispensable tool in planning and implementation of educational programmes no matter the level.

Furthermore, from the study of manpower deficiencies which is due to inappropriate placement of personal was indicated as major constraint with a mean of 2.68. Inspite of the far reaching efforts by both national and international organizations in the training of educational planners and administrators, the educational systems in developing countries are still manned by people who have no basic training in such specialized areas. This is in line with Adesina (1993) who reported that educational planning in Nigeria is managed by people who don't have the real knowledge of planning, which account for failure in plan implementation. He therefore insists that skilled manpower should be available for planning, in order to make implementation easier. The study also indicated that the main reason for the failure of planning and implementation of higher education programmes is inadequate funding. This manifests in three dimensions, namely, cost under-estimation, over-estimation and misappropriation. Due to unreliable statistical data it is common to find educational planners grossly under-estimating the cost of planned educational projects and programmes.

This is compounded by the unstable market trend that renders realistic plan estimates less effective during implementation time. This agrees with Fafunwa (1974), Taiwo (1980) and Agabi (1999) who reported that the development of Nigerian higher education programmes has been affected adversely by inadequate funding. Therefore, there is need for rationality in managing funds allocated for planning and implementation of higher of educational programmes and creating no room for wastage.

**Conclusion**

The study concluded that the planning and implementation of higher education programmes in Rivers State is faced with obvious constraints. Ranging from inadequate funding unreliable statistical data, lack of unskilled manpower, and political interference, it was also observed that funding as a constraint makes it difficult for higher education programmes to meet up to the needs of the people in that funds required for the implementation of the proposed plan is never available.

Higher education programmes is very crucial for the development of a Nations high level manpower. It is a task that beholves on all developing nations of the world to work towards achieving. From Nigerian perspective and Rivers State in particular, it may not be realistic without an appreciable move on what is on grounds in terms of planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

**Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings the following recommendations are made:

1) There is an urgent need for reviews of educational plans of both federal and state as to make it relevant to the state of the art.

2) Funds should be made available by both state and federal to educational planners and other professionals who are involved in higher educational plan and implementation. At the same vain, funds, disbursed must be judiciously accounted for.

3) The government should draw a dividing line between technical and political decision as to guide office holders on their limits especially in technical matters like planning.

4) There is immediate need for the establishment of a National Data Bank (NDB) which will readily provide accurate information on areas of data and statistics relating to higher education.

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