



# Tertiary Education and Socio-Economic Development of North-Central Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study assessed the contributions of tertiary institutions to the socio-economic development of North-central, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was made up 360 academic staff. The population for the study comprised all the academic staff in in public tertiary institutions in North-central Nigeria. Descriptive survey design of the correlational type was adopted for this study. Multi stage sampling techniques were adopted to select the sample for the study. The questionnaires was rated using a modified four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) =3 points, Disagree (D) =2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 point. The questionnaire was Titled, "Contribution Questionnaire" (CQ). Test re-test method was applied through a trail testing to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a computerized application was used to carry out all the analyses in the research work. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data for the study. The result collected showed that manpower production, manpower training, education development, health development, technology advancement, community development, conflict resolution, peace keeping and making, agricultural development, tourism development, cultural development and political development are the contributions of tertiary institutions in North central Nigeria. The result also revealed that federal, states and private tertiary institutions in North central are not adequate for the population of students seeking admission. Based on the study the paper recommends that government should increase the budgetary allocation of tertiary education in the region to aid human and materials development in the institutions. The government should establish more tertiary institutions in the region.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is generally accepted as a process of transmitting the cultural heritage, stabilizing the present and improving or changing the future. It promotes development – cognitively, affectively and psychomotively. Education is a process, a vehicle and a means. It is, for instance, a process of acquiring knowledge of some basic facts of life; it is a vehicle or means by which a generation transmits to its succeeding generation, its cherished cultural and associated values considered for positive development. Furthermore, education can also be conceptualised as connoting and meaning some positive commodity, the quantum, stock or level of such knowledge and experience that is acquired. The knowledge and experience including the skills acquired makes him a capital, that is, human capital (NOUN 2011).

Education concerns the individual and society. It is the act of systematic development or

training of the mind, capabilities or character through instruction or study. Education varies as widely in its forms, philosophy, contents, and methods as there are different societies in the world. Education is a life-long process that has interpretation in purpose, type and level. It is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as for the modification or changing of same in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation. Education is an instrument for effecting national development. Education can be defined as production and reproduction of knowledge of people's way of life (i.e. their culture) with the aim of preserving and maintaining the social structure that will be able to guarantee social order and changes in the society. The importance of education to human being cannot be over-emphasized. Education is a human right that should be provided to all human beings solely by reasons of being human. The need for higher education is partly based on the fact that those with higher education qualifications have a better chance of securing a job in a tough market compared to those without higher education qualifications (NOUN, 2012).

Education take different forms. Basic education secondary school education and tertiary education. The definition of higher education differs according to the context. Almost all definitions agree that higher education refers to post-secondary education (or study beyond the level of post-secondary education) where a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded at the end of study. Higher education builds on the level of competence, knowledge and skills normally acquired in secondary education (NOUN, 2012). Federal Republic of Nigeria in her national Policy on Education (2013) defined tertiary education as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI) (FRN, 2013)

The Association of African University's (AAU) Working Group on Higher Education recommends that higher education should include tertiary education institutions other than universities. In addition, at the second African Union (AU) Meeting of Experts, higher education was described as including all post-secondary education, including universities, polytechnics and technical colleges, teachers training institutions, institute for medical training and agriculture (and other fields), distance education centers, and research centers and institutes, with the possibility of expanding to include other forms of post-secondary education. In this context, the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), defined tertiary Education as the Post-Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including courses as are given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such Institutions as may be allied to them (NOUN, 2011; NOUN 2012).

Tertiary education objectives in Nigeria includes; contribute to national development through high level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service;

forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013).

Tertiary education have been described by Ayeni, Tusayi, Joseph, and Obatayo (2018) as pillar of development. NOUN (2012) noted that economic and social developments are increasingly driving by the advancement and application of knowledge via tertiary education. Education in general and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. The nation looks up to higher education to through its traditional functions of teaching, research and community service to develop manpower and disseminate necessary knowledge that are needed in industry and other sectors. The Nigeria higher education system comprised of universities, polytechnics, and colleges offering programmes in teacher education and agriculture. Higher education is a community of scholars, free to pursue knowledge without undue interference from anywhere.

Nigerian universities are established to mainly address manpower needs of the nation. These needs as well as goals and aspirations of universities are achieved through the implementation of formulated policies (Daniel-Kalio, 2019). Higher educational institutions in Nigeria from their modest beginning are expected to offer services that significantly contribute within the context of a sound macro-economic and political environment to the growth of the society (Ayeni, & Ezirim, 2023). Agwaranze in Ogunode (2020) maintains that, Universities have the basic responsibility to provide good educational opportunities through a well-developed curriculum that aids students to obtain academic and professional competences in selected fields, fulfill appropriate standards of academic conduct, explore cultural interest and the enhancement of cultural skills.

One cannot doubt the fact that the university education system has enhanced social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress in Nigeria. The country is more blessed now with specialists at various fields of endeavour: medicine, law, engineering, philosophy, education, etc. And due to this development, the nation is becoming more and more dynamic and self-reliant as the days go by. This has been made possible because of the university education (Otonko 2012). Tertiary education is established for national development (Ayeni, Sani, Idris & Uzoigwe, 2019), for solving national problems and for technological advancement (Ogunode, Tseveda, & Atim 2024).

There are many investigations on tertiary education in Nigeria. For instance, Aiyedun, Olatunde-Aiyedun, & Ogunode, (2021); Sajuyigbe, Madu-Igwe, & Babalola, (2015) and Ukwai, Uko, & Udida, (2013) looked at problems facing tertiary education in Nigeria, Ogunruku, (2016); Daniel-Kalio, (2019), looked at the leadership aspect of Nigerian tertiary education, Adavbiele (2016); Adewale and,Taiye (2018) focused on technological aspects of the tertiary education while Uche, & Wordu, (2015); Sanni, (2016); Ogunode, Abubakar, & Ajape (2021) and Ogunode, Olowonefa,& Suleiman, (2023) critically assessed the funding of tertiary education in Nigeria. Ekpoh, Aniefiok, & NSE, (2020) and Ogunode & Ukozor (2022) investigated how insecurity affected tertiary education in Nigeria and Marks, (2017) looked at the brain-drain challenge in the tertiary education in Nigeria. Policy implementation on tertiary education (Okpata, & Udofia, 2016;Viennet, & Pont,2017; Nwankwoala, 2018). Motivation in tertiary education (Akinfolarin, & Gabriel, 2014;Akinsanya & Akinsanya, 2015).

Also, Ebehikhalu, and Dawam (2016) assessed the level of infrastructure facilities in tertiary education in Nigeria, Mgboji, Uzoegwu, & Onah, (n.d) looked at how corruption is affecting

tertiary education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu & Ajape (2020) investigated into the research programme of Nigeria' tertiary education. Akomolafe, & Ibijola, (2014) focused on accreditation of academic programme in the tertiary education and Ogunode, Edinoh, and Chinedu, (2023) assessed the level of AI in the tertiary education in Nigeria. It appear in recent time that studies on contributions of Nigeria' tertiary education to the socio-economic development are lacking both empirically and in a review forms. It is based on this, that this study seek to fill the research gap, thus; looking at assessing the contributions of tertiary education to the socio-economic development of North-central, Nigeria.

The primary purpose of this study is to critically assess the contributions of tertiary education to the socio-economic development of the North-Central region of Nigeria. As tertiary education is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of human capital development and societal transformation, this study seeks to explore how institutions of higher learning have influenced various dimensions of socio-economic progress within the region. The research aims to provide empirical insights into the roles played by universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in fostering development through the production of skilled labor, technological innovation, policy research, and community engagement.

In order to effectively guide the investigation and achieve the stated objectives, the following research questions have been formulated. The first question seeks to examine the extent to which tertiary education has contributed to the socio-economic development of North-Central Nigeria. This question focuses on understanding the depth and breadth of impact tertiary institutions have had on the region's economy and society. The second research question addresses the issue of institutional adequacy by asking to what extent the existing tertiary institutions in North-Central Nigeria can accommodate the surging population of admission seekers. These questions serve as a framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout the course of the study.

To further structure the analysis and provide a basis for empirical testing, the following null hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) has been formulated for this study: *There is no significant relationship between the contributions of tertiary institutions and the socio-economic development of North-Central Nigeria.* This hypothesis will be tested using appropriate statistical tools to determine whether tertiary education institutions play a measurable role in promoting economic growth, social transformation, and institutional progress within the region. The outcome of this hypothesis test will provide evidence either to support or refute the assumed link between higher education and regional development.

## METHOD

The sample size was made up 360 academic staff. The population for this study comprised all the academic staff in in North-central Nigeria. Descriptive survey design of the correlational type was adopted for this study. Multi stage sampling techniques were adopted to select the sample for the study. In determining the sample of the study, the population size table of Research Advisor (2006) was adopted. Stratified and simple random sampling method was used to select six public tertiary institutions in the region. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires have two section. Section A was used collect data on bio-data of respondents while section B of the questionnaire was used to collect data on the subject matter. The questionnaires was rated using a modified four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A)=3 points, Disagree (D)=2 points and

Strongly Disagree (SD)=1 point. The questionnaire was Titled, "Contribution Questionnaire" (CQ). Test re-test method was applied through a trail testing to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered on 20 academic staff from 2 public universities in Kwara State, which were not part of the sample institutions within an interval of two weeks. The data collected were subjected to coefficient-reliability using Pearson product-moment correlation statistics at 0.88 coefficient for school development programmes. Thus, the instruments were adjudged reliable for the pursuance of the study. These yielded help to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a computerized application was used to carry out all the analyses in the research work. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic for the operational hypotheses. The hypotheses were attested at .05 level of significance.

## RESULT

**Table 1: Tertiary education contribution to socio-economic development**

N/S	Adequately of Tertiary Education	X	S.D	Decision
1	Manpower production	1.72	2.66	Agree
2	Manpower training	1.34	3.18	Agree
3	Education development	1.76	2.88	Agree
4	Health development	1.78	2.91	Agree
5	Technology advancement	1.81	2.99	Agree
6	Community development	1.45	3.13	Agree
7	Conflict resolution	1.51	3.05	Agree
8	Peace keeping and making	1.77	2.74	Agree
9	Agricultural development	1.42	3.31	Agree
10	Tourism development	1.70	2.83	Agree
11	Cultural development	1.32	3.14	Agree
12	Political development	1.41	3.34	Agree
13	<b>Overall Means</b>			3.12

Table 1 find out the contributions of tertiary institutions to socio-economic development of North-Central, Nigeria. Result shows that respondents agree that tertiary institution have contributed to manpower production ,(item 1, X= 2.66), manpower training (item 2, X = 3.18), education development (item 3, X = 2.88), health development (item 4, X= 2.91), technology advancement (item 5, X = 2.99), community development (item 6, X = 3.13), conflict resolution (item 7, X = 3.05), peace keeping and making (item 8, X = 2.74), agricultural development(item 9, X = 3.31), tourism development (item 10, X = 2.83), Cultural development (item 11, X = 3.14) and political development (item 12, X = 3.34) with an overall mean score of 3.12, this means that tertiary institutions in North central Nigeria have contributed to the development of manpower production, manpower training, education development, health development, technology advancement, community development, conflict resolution, peace keeping and making, agricultural development, tourism development, cultural development and political development.

**Table 2: Adequacy of Tertiary Education in North-central Nigeria**

N/S		X	S.D	Decision
1	Federal tertiary institutions in North central are adequate	1.73	<b>2.42</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
2	State tertiary institutions in North central are adequate	1.76	<b>2.18</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
3	Private tertiary institutions in North central are adequate	1.75	<b>2.46</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
4	Total Means		2.41	

Table 2 find out the adequacy of tertiary institutions in North-central Nigeria. The result obtained indicated that respondents agree that federal tertiary institutions in North central are adequate (item 1,  $X = 2.42$ ), state tertiary institutions in North central are adequate (item 2,  $X = 2.18$ ) and private tertiary institutions in North central are adequate (item 3,  $X = 2.46$ ) with an overall mean of 2.41. This implies that federal, states and private tertiary institutions in North central are not adequate.

### Hypothesis Testing

$H_1$  There is no significant relationship between tertiary institutions contribution and socio-economic development in North-central, Nigeria

**Table 1: Test of Relationship between Tertiary Institutions Contribution and Socio-Economic Development in North-central, Nigeria.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	$r^2$	Sig@0.05	Decision
Tertiary Institutions Contributions	360	2.27	1.07	0.832	0.665	0.000	Significant
Socio-economic Development	128	3.12	0.78				

Result on Table 1 showed that there was a significant relationship between tertiary institutions contribution and socio-economic development in North-central, Nigeria ( $p = 0.000$ , which is less than 0.05 level of significance). As a result, the hypothesis was rejected. In other words, there was a very strong positive correlation (0.832) between tertiary institutions contribution and socio-economic development in North-central, Nigeria. The  $r^2$  value of 0.665 shows that only 65.0% of the variance in the various contribution of tertiary institutions to the socio-economic development in North Central, Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria have made substantial contributions across a wide array of national development sectors. These institutions serve as foundational pillars for manpower production and training, equipping individuals with the requisite skills and competencies to meet the demands of various industries. Their impact is particularly notable in the area of education development, where they foster the intellectual and professional growth of students through both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and play a significant role in the training of educators who further strengthen the nation's educational system.

Additionally, these institutions have contributed immensely to health development by producing medical professionals such as doctors, nurses, public health workers, and researchers who serve in both urban and rural areas, thereby enhancing healthcare delivery. In terms of technological advancement, tertiary institutions have facilitated innovation through research and the establishment of science and technology departments, thereby contributing to national scientific progress and industrial development.

Moreover, these institutions are key agents in community development, engaging in

outreach programs, partnerships, and development projects that address the needs of their immediate environments. They also actively participate in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives by hosting forums, providing research on conflict dynamics, and fostering intergroup dialogue, thus promoting stability and social cohesion in the region.

In the sectors of agriculture and tourism, tertiary institutions contribute by conducting research into improved farming techniques, agricultural policy, environmental conservation, and tourism management. These efforts support food security and promote Nigeria's cultural and ecological assets. Cultural and political development are also significantly influenced by these institutions as they offer programs in history, cultural studies, political science, and governance, thereby nurturing informed citizens and future leaders.

These findings align with those of Ayeni, Andeshi, and Uzoigwe (2022), who concluded that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have significantly contributed to manpower development, in-service training, and technological progress. Otonko (2012) also emphasized that university education transcends being a mere educational tier; rather, it is a pivotal element of human development on a global scale. It not only provides the high-level skills necessary for participation in competitive labor markets but also delivers the training essential for a broad spectrum of professionals—ranging from educators and healthcare workers to civil servants, scientists, and entrepreneurs. These professionals, through their expertise and leadership, drive local economies, strengthen civil institutions, teach future generations, and administer effective governance, thereby playing decisive roles in shaping the trajectory of society.

However, the study also disclosed a major limitation in the region's higher education system: the inadequacy of federal, state, and private tertiary institutions to meet the rising demand for university admissions. With increasing numbers of secondary school graduates seeking post-secondary education, the available spaces in existing institutions are grossly insufficient. Ogunode and Ohiosumua (2022) corroborate this concern, noting that the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is not commensurate with the growing population of admission seekers. This systemic inadequacy contributes to high competition, overcrowded classrooms, overstretched facilities, and compromised quality of education. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that the transformative potential of tertiary education is fully realized across the nation.

## CONCLUSION

The study assessed the contributions of tertiary education to the socio-economic development of North-central, Nigeria with specific objectives that includes; to find out the extent to which tertiary education have contributed to socio-economic development of North-central Nigeria; and to find out if tertiary institutions North-central Nigeria are adequate for the population. The result collected showed that manpower production, manpower training, education development, health development, technology advancement, community development, conflict resolution, peace keeping and making, agricultural development, tourism development, cultural development and political development are the contributions of tertiary institutions in North central Nigeria. The result also revealed that federal, states and private tertiary institutions in North central are not adequate for the population of students seeking admission. Based on the study the paper recommends that government should increase the budgetary allocation of tertiary education in the region to aid human and materials development in the institutions. The government should establish more tertiary institutions in the region.

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