

Perceived Commercialization of Higher Education in South-South Nigeria: Evaluating the Impact of 21st Century Higher Education

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Abstract

The study investigated the perception of higher education students in South-South Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A marginal estimate population size of 607,000 higher education students was used. Four hundred and ninety-eight (498) students drawn from various higher education institutions in South-South including universities, polytechnics, and colleges constituted the sample for the study. An instrument developed by the researcher titled: "Perception on the Commercialization of Higher Education Inventory" (PCHEI) was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was established by two experts in educational administration and three experts in educational measurement and evaluation. Cronbach Alpha reliability of the instrument yielded 0.83 and 0.92 on the sections of perception and impact of commercialization of higher education respectively. Data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while ANOVA and Independent samples t-test were used to test the corresponding null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed among others that students experience multiple charges across all levels of school administration starting from the department to the faculty and the central administration, with commercialization of education impacting students negatively by motivating them to adopt unethical means to generate funds for their education. In addition, post graduate students experience a significantly higher level of educational commercialization compared to undergraduate and non-degree students.

Keywords: Perceived, Commercialization, Higher Education, South-South, Nigeria, Evaluating

INTRODUCTION

Education is construed as the most veritable vehicle for achieving national development and societal transformation. In order to establish and promote an educational system that offers citizens the opportunity to improve on the quality of life and make far-reaching contributions on the economic development of the nation, various policies, reviews and recommendations have been formulated at the national and state levels. World Bank (1999) stated that education generally and higher education specifically not only serve the purpose of generating knowledge, but also provides the pedestal for

the application and utilization of knowledge. Unfortunately, the goals of higher education, as contained in the Nigerian National Policy of Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004), are being threatened with long-standing problems such as poor administration, inefficiency, inequity, and poor quality assurance (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2012)

A cursory exploration of the aims of higher education as outline by FRN (2004) highlighted the aims of higher education thus: “contribution to national development through high level manpower training; development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and the society, and the development of the intellectual capabilities of the individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment”. These goals are to be pursued vigorously through “teaching, research and development, knowledge generation and dissemination, international cooperation, and dedicated services to the communities through extra-mural and consultancy services.” An analysis of the above goals by Olatunji (2018) shows that the central focus was aimed at providing access and quality higher education for the Nigerian citizenry. Access as used in his analysis involves at least four key components such as broadening the number of students who get enrolled, ensuring that students from non-traditional social classes are enrolled, maintaining retention and completion rate and lastly, physical access through the provision of basic resources and enabling environment that enhance learning. Similarly, quality education refers to emphasis on optimal development of the individual as well as the inculcation and promotion of values needed for responsible citizenship.

From the above analysis, it is suggested that the ultimate aim of higher education in Nigeria should be tailored towards providing access to qualitative education that promotes excellence and responsible citizenship among Nigerians. This ultimate aim is now being thwarted with the increasing spate of commercialization of higher education. To understand the characteristics of a commercialized educational system, it is imperative to understand the import of commercialization. Emesiobi (2018) defined commercialization as the process of providing or distributing educational goods and services to individuals or organizations for profit-oriented motives. Commercialization of education is a trend whereby emphasis is not laid on making educational provision a quest for public good, but a more business oriented enterprise with the aim of making profit

In this light, Ogbogu and Caulfied (2015) defined commercialization of education as the restructuring of an educational institutions in whole or part, giving them the right to accumulate and maximize profit. Hence, commercialization of education refers to the process through which private ownership and management of education is made with the sole aim of generating profits. Commercialization of education could also be seen as the specific change in education services, making it a business enterprise, where education tilts and now pursues profit or return on investment Raturi (cited in Amaddioha & Akor, 2020).

The historical development of higher education in Nigeria is tainted with multiple instances of efforts aimed at the commercialization of education, the recent simultaneous increase in school fees and other “non-statutory charges” by higher education institutions is a pointer that the commercialization of education has come to stay. Tracing the history of Nigeria’s effort at commercializing higher education, Ibrahim (2008) stated that successive governments in Nigeria post-civil war have maintained the legacy of increasing tuition fees without making any increased budgetary provisions for education.

Some scholars have argued that commercialization of education in Nigeria can be traced to the missionaries who began private schools before they were taken over by the government (Ankeli, 2019). On the contrary, the goal of the missionary education at least in the Southern part of Nigeria as documented by Murray (1932) and supported by Nwadiakor (2013) was the conversion of students to Christianity. When government took over the management of education in Nigeria, the sector suffered critical setback which paved the way for the emergence of private schools. Another historical landmark that informed the commercialization of higher education in Nigeria was the granting of licenses by the former president Obasanjo administration to private individuals and organizations to run universities and other higher education institutions.

Among the reasons given for the commercialization of higher education in Nigeria includes the need to raise the fallen standard of education, promote economic development, create academia-industry collaboration, provide funding for education, and the globalization of education (Ozioko 2018). Other scholars such as Ankeli (2019) argued that some of the advantages of a commercialized education include creation of employment opportunities, enhances economic development, prepares students to face global challenges, increase access to education, and enhance constructive competition between academic institutions to gain the best students, funding and research.

These advantages have been challenged by some researchers, such as Siewierska, Du Beat, Sam and Zainab (cited in Osaat & Jack, 2020; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2015). For these authors, commercialization of higher education is associated with a shift to an academic capitalist regime where institutions exhibit market-based behaviour. In such context, the public good mission of education is relegated to the backseat, while the generation of revenue and increase in market share is given a greater prominence. The attendant consequence of this is that institutions adopt strategies to cut cost and even academic integrity. Students who observe these trends tend to engage more in cheating behaviour and other forms of academic dishonesty (Kezar& Bernstein-Sierra, 2015).

Another argument against the commercialization of higher education is that it promotes a depletion of accountability among university managers (Siewierska, 2020). When university managers are given the mandate to generate funds, they often do it in a manner that does not conform to ethical standards. It is therefore not surprising that students are made to pay huge sums of money at the departmental, faculty, college and university levels (Utomi, 2019). The specific amount students are required to pay and how the funds generated will be utilized does not follow any fiscal arrangement.

Similarly, Wong (2016) raised a specific problem with the commercialization of education, which he referred to as the “commodification” of education”. The commodification of education sees education in monetary terms and economic value. When this happens there is a tendency for teaching and learning to depreciate. The educational process is now seen as a transaction where students pay fees and other required charges, in return they are provided knowledge. The payment is now equated with the knowledge provided. Any further use of the knowledge in serving the public is not considered. The flow of instruction is targeted at pleasing the student who is considered a “customer.” Citing the experience based on the American higher education, Bok (2003) stated that with the commodification of universities, university staff are reduced to employees with no clear sense of intellectual purpose, with the only purpose the universities serve is the interest of corporate America.

The commercialization of education poses a greater threat to students’ well-being. With profit being the major purpose of universities, little effort is given to how students’ navigate the

financial challenges that come with higher education. Universities only support services that generate income and revenue for the institution, while other services like the counselling centre or students' support services are given little or no consideration. With students constantly searching for loans, going into debts and working multiple jobs to meet the financial demands of institutions, there is the possibility of a break-down in mental health and functioning. The findings reported by Sweet, et al (2014) adduce that students' loan and debt are significantly associated with higher levels of stress, depression, and poorer self-reported general health. With the regular and unabated increase in tuition fees and other sundry charges in Nigerian universities (Ikpesu, 2018), there is the possibility that many students might be experiencing mental health challenges.

Another major argument against the commercialization of higher education is that it inhibits creativity and social justice. With the commercialization of higher education, attention is given to mainly to the Scientific, Technological, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. This has the consequences of limiting access to students in humanities and other disciplines such as, like language, art, and poetry. In addition, commercialization of education ensures that only those who can afford education should have access to education. As such, parents and families who cannot afford the high cost of education are forced to avoid higher education. There is also the far-reaching consequence of limiting access to students from marginalized background, low socioeconomic background and underdeveloped communities, as well as educationally less developed States. This eventually leads to the "homogenization and unilateralism of critical thinking" (Du Beat, 2018), with poor level of cultural diversity on school campuses and a student population that is susceptible to social manipulation and less capable of critical rigor.

Summarizing the negative impacts of commercialization of education on the society, Du Beat averred that commercialization of education will result in fees hike which in turn will lead to an exclusive admission procedure, as would contribute to the existing social and economic disparity between regions and individuals, as well as the dropout rates and the unemployment currently in the society. Furthermore, Ibrahim (2008) argued that the commercialization of education is anti-poor as it would deny millions of youth access to university education, while placing the burden of funding education on parents and students many of whom are from poor working class background.

The commercialization of education, which started in the United States of America (Bok, 2003) has trickled down to Nigeria. While the Federal Government has had to subsidize higher education to a large extent for Nigerian youths, it is still difficult for majority of them to access higher education due to a drop in budgetary allocation to higher education sector. As denoted by Lawal (2019), the real value of government allocation for university education had declined by 27 percent between 1990 and 1997, even as enrolment grew by 77 per cent. For three years – between 2004 and 2006 – N196 billion was allocated to federal universities (which is only 14.8 per cent of the required N1.3249bn billion). This deplorable condition has further witnessed an increase in tuition hike at various higher education institutions in Nigeria. It is also disheartening that Nigerians face inequality in access to higher institutions of their choice in terms of disparity in tuition based on state of origin.

A meticulous look at the analysis on hike in tuition in some universities by Lawal (2019) reveal that, Osun State University increased its fees from N95,000 to N135,000, Anambra State University, from N76, 000 to N139, 000; Lagos State University (LASU), from N96, 750 to N158, 250; Imo State University, from N120, 000 to N150, 000; Plateau State University, from N50, 000 to N100, 000 and University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) from N16, 000 to N75, 000. For Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), returning students who are indigenes of Oyo and Osun State pay N200, 000 while non-indigenes pay N250, 000 from N50, 000; Kwara State University

(KWASU) first year students who are indigenes pay N99, 500.00, while 200-400Level students pay N109, 500.00. For non-indigenes, new students pay N200, 000 while others pay N210, 000 from the initial N65, 000 to N80, 000.

Furthermore, in South-South, Nigeria, details of the school fees at the Rivers State University, schedule for 2020/2021 academic sessions indicated that fresh students of Rivers State origin in Faculties of Agriculture, Education, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, Sciences, and Environmental Sciences, are to pay N65,000 while those of non-River origin are required to pay N115,000. Those from the Faculties of Basic Medical Sciences, College of Medical Sciences, Engineering and Law are expected to pay N85,000, N85,000, N75,000 and N75,000 respectively if they are Rivers indigenes and for non-Rivers indigenes they are required to N145,000, N145,000, N125,000, and N125,000 respectively. For returning students, the fee ranged from N50,000 for Rivers indigenes in the Faculties of Agriculture, Education, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, Sciences, and Environmental Sciences to N85,000 for non-River indigenes. For returning students of Rivers indigenes in the faculties of basic Medical Sciences, College of Medical Sciences, Engineering and Law, their fees ranged from N55,000 to N75,000, while non-Rivers indigenes the fees ranged from N105,000 to N125,000. This is in addition to a N39,150 acceptance fee for fresh students, N8,500 medical examination fee for fresh students, N15,550 certificate verification fee for fresh students, N5,000 sports fee, N5,000 Faculty/Departmental Association dues. The above figures exclude the payment for accommodation and living expenses as majority of the students are resident outside the school campus.

Similarly, the schedule for school fees at another State-owned University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE, 2021), denote that the minimum fee was N50,200 for fresh students of Rivers State origin, while for non-Rivers indigene, the minimum fee is N60,200. In addition to the above, fresh students are required to make an additional payment of N62,000 for other charges. These afore stated fees, though not as high as those of other institutions mentioned above in other states, is still considerably high for a State in a region where there is massive youth unemployment, low socioeconomic development and widespread security threats (Ogele, 2020).

With an increased tendency towards the commercialization of higher education, many universities including those in the South-South zone are prone to admitting more students than they have the capacity to enroll. These institutions are likely to ignore the quality and quantity of lecturers available, the number of lecture halls and hostel residencies available might not also be considered when making admission decisions. More recently, Abutu (2018) reported that many institutions, both Federal and State-owned Universities have abandoned the National Universities Commission directive that each university should admit a maximum of 50 students for each undergraduate course per year.

The setting aside of this directive could also be attributed to the huge number of admission seekers each year with limited spaces in the various institutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The agitation of students over the high cost of tertiary education globally and specifically in Nigeria has been a source of concern to stakeholders in the education sector. Reports on how students of federal and state owned universities have ventilated their anger over hike in tuition fee/other fees are replete in the print and social media across the globe. In 2017, it was reported that students from three states owned universities in Ondo State participated in a protest which took a dangerous dimension over fee hike. This protest lead to the closure of two institutions by the management. Students were compelled to proceed on an unscheduled mid-semester break. In early July, 2021,

students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, in a federal university in Anambra State also took to the streets in protest over 2020/2021 tuition/other fees hike. However, the management of the institution referred to the claims of the protesting students as a rumour, false alarm and fake news aimed at destabilizing the peace of the institution. Similarly, in April, 2018, the management of the university of Ibadan ejected their medical students from their hall of residence for protesting upward review of professional training /accommodation fees. There are growing concerns among students and parents that if tertiary institution administrators do not find alternative and lasting means of generating funds for sustaining the financial obligations in their institutions there will be a continuous rise in tuition and other charges. While this trend of commercialization continues, the brunt is bore by students who come from homes where their parents are mostly petty traders, peasant farmers, daily paid labourers, fishermen, teachers, civil servants and pensioners who have not been paid their gratuity for years. These students and their parents are saddled with the responsibility to source for funds to meet the constant financial demands from their institutions because failure to pay these fees as at when due attracts a penalty of five or ten percent extra charges as the case maybe on the approved fees. Sadly, the real value of higher education, which includes responsible citizenship and the development of democratic ethos, is jettisoned for a materialistic outlook. Most students who are unable to pay their fees loose the admission, do not have access to their university result portal as a result might not be able to determine their academic standing until it's too late to take any remedial action. This would result in wasted years and high dropout rate. To address these challenges, it is imperative that the perception of students on the commercialization of education is ascertained, which would further be utilized to enhance the teaching and learning paradigm of 21st century higher education institutions. In recent times there has been agitation

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the perception of students on the extent to which higher education has been commercialized in South-South Nigeria. In more specific terms, the objectives of this study includes:

1. Ascertain the areas of perceived commercialization of higher education in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Determine the impact of commercialization of higher education on students' in South-South, Nigeria.
3. Find out students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on level of study in South-South, Nigeria
4. Find out students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on mode of study in South-South, Nigeria?

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. What are the areas of perceived commercialization of higher education in South-South Nigeria?
2. What are the perceived impact of commercialization of higher education on students' in South-South, Nigeria?

3. What are students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on level of study in South-South, Nigeria?
4. What are students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on mode of study in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The under listed hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to further guide the study

1. There is no significant difference in students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on level of study in South-South Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on mode of study in South-South Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The following procedure was used to conduct the research:

Design: This study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

Study Population: The population of the study consists all students in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities in South South, Nigeria. Despite multiple attempts the specific number of students could not be ascertained, so a marginal estimate population size of 607,000 students was stated based on the suggestion of Nwankwo (2016)

Sampling Procedure: The sample for the study comprised 498 students, drawn using multi-stage sampling techniques. In adopting this technique, the three States in South South Nigeria were randomly selected out of the six States in the region. From these States, three Federal Institutions which offer undergraduate, as well as post-graduate programmes were conveniently selected. Thereafter, purposive sampling technique was used to select non-degree awarding institutions such as Colleges of Education and Polytechnics.

Instrument: An instrument titled "Perception of the Commercialization of Higher Education Inventory" (PCHEI) developed by the researcher, was used for data collection. The instrument is made up of three sections. Section one presents participants' demographic data such as gender, discipline, mode of study, level of study, and name of institution were requested. Section two comprised 10-items designed to elicit the response of students on perceived areas of the commercialization of higher education. While section three consists 11-items, utilized to obtain students' perceived impact of commercialization of higher education. The instrument was structured using a modified four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) which were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 point(s) respectively. The validity of the instrument was established by two experts in Educational Administration and two experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Cronbach Alpha reliability of the instrument yielded 0.83 and 0.92 on Section Two (Perception) and Section Three (Impact) of the PCHEI respectively.

A convenience sampling approach was used to administer the instrument online. The instrument was designed using Google Forms® for data collection. The administration of the

instrument lasted for a period of three weeks. At the end of data collection, the total number of responses gathered was from 498 respondents.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the corresponding null hypotheses. The data analysis was done using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (Version 21).

Result Presentation

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on students' perceived areas of commercialization of higher education in South-South Nigeria

| Students' perceived areas of commercialization | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 1 Arbitrary upward review of tuition and other charges without considering the financial impact on students | 3.09 | 0.89 |
| 2 At every point during the semester, students are required to make one payment or the other (ie Faculty, Departmental, Students' Union dues, Portal access fee etc) | 2.65 | 0.92 |
| 3 Bank charges on every payment or transaction made | 2.79 | 0.84 |
| 4 High acceptance fee on admission offer | 2.58 | 0.88 |
| 5 High examination fee | 2.24 | 0.62 |
| 6 High development levy | 2.34 | 1.04 |
| 7 Fees paid for thesis defence (Masters/ PhD programmes) are very high | 2.66 | 0.74 |
| 8 Clearance fee before graduation is very high | 2.59 | 0.84 |
| 9 Fees paid by fresh students at all levels (undergraduates/ graduates) are very high | 2.92 | 0.92 |
| 10 Penalty of extra charges on fees for students who are unable to meet the payment deadline | 2.75 | 0.84 |
| Grand Mean | 2.66 | 0.85 |

Based on the result shown in Table 1 on the perception of students on the commercialization of education, it was shown that item 1: Arbitrary upward review of tuition and other charges without considering the financial impact on students ($\bar{X}=3.09$, $SD = 0.89$), item 2: At every point during the semester, students are required to make one payment or the other (ie Faculty, Departmental, Students' Union dues, Portal access fee etc ($\bar{X}= 2.65$, $SD = 0.92$), item 3: Bank charges on every payment or transaction made ($\bar{X}= 2.79$, $SD = 0.84$), item 4: High acceptance fee on admission offer ($\bar{X}= 2.58$, $SD = 0.88$), item 7 : Fees paid for thesis defence (Masters/ PhD programmes) are very high ($\bar{X}=2.66$, $SD = 0.74$), item 8: Clearance fee before graduation is very high ($\bar{X}= 2.59$, $SD = 0.84$), item 9: Fees paid by fresh students at all levels (undergraduates/ graduates) are very high ($\bar{X}= 2.92$, $SD = 0.92$), and item 10: Penalty of 5% extra charges on fees for students who are unable to meet the payment deadline ($\bar{X}= 2.75$, $SD = 0.84$). On the other hand, the table showed that students disagreed on item 5: High examination fee ($\bar{X}= 2.24$, $SD = 0.62$) and item 6: High development levy ($\bar{X}= 2.34$,

SD = 1.04). On the whole, a grand mean value of (2.66, SD = 0.85) was obtained which suggested that students have a negative perception of commercialization of higher education.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of students' Perceived Impact of Commercialization of Higher Education

| | Impact of commercialization of higher education | Mean | SD |
|----|---|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | High rate of students' drop out due to uncertainty of capability to pay fees | 2.94 | 0.92 |
| 2 | Students become involved in unethical practices to raise funds | 2.71 | 1.03 |
| 3 | Maladjustment to academic activities due to concerns in meeting financial obligations at school | 3.07 | 1.07 |
| 4 | Decreased level of accountability among higher institution administrators and management | 2.85 | 1.01 |
| 5 | High rate of examination malpractice among students due to fear of failure and consequently paying extra fees | 2.81 | 0.95 |
| 6 | High rate of truancy among students who need to combine work and schooling to sustain the financial demands of their academic programme | 2.96 | 1.03 |
| 7 | Uncertainty in academic standing due to inability to access result portal which might lead to failure/ extra year in school | 2.90 | 1.07 |
| 8 | Inability of indigent students to write examinations due to non payment of previous fees. | 2.95 | 1.10 |
| 9 | Poor access to education for qualified and intelligent students due to inability to pay fees. | 3.00 | 1.16 |
| 10 | Excessive workload on academic staff due to population explosion in devise programmes | 3.01 | 1.11 |
| 11 | Low self esteem due to inability to pay fees | 2.82 | 0.96 |
| | Grand Mean | 2.91 | 1.04 |

From Table 2, some of the impact of the commercialization of education as indicated by students' include : High rate of students' drop out due to uncertainty of capability to pay fees ($\bar{X} = 2.94$, SD = 0.92), students become involved in unethical practices to raise funds ($\bar{X} = 2.71$, SD = 1.03), maladjustment to academic activities due to concerns in meeting financial obligations at school ($\bar{X} = 3.07$, SD = 1.07), decreased level of accountability among school administrators and management ($\bar{X} = 2.85$, SD = 1.01), High rate of examination malpractice among students due to fear of failure and consequently paying extra fees ($\bar{X} = 2.81$, SD = 0.95), as well as high rate of truancy among students who need to combine work and schooling to sustain the financial demands of their academic programmes ($\bar{X} = 2.96$, SD = 1.03). Other impacts of commercialization of education include; uncertainty in academic standing due to inability to access result portal which might lead to failure/ extra year in school ($\bar{X} = 2.90$, SD = 1.07), inability of indigent students to write examinations due to non-payment of previous fees ($\bar{X} = 2.95$, SD = 1.10), poor access to education for qualified and intelligent students due to inability to pay fees. ($\bar{X} = 3.00$, SD = 1.16), excessive workload on academic staff due to population explosion in devise programmes ($\bar{X} = 3.01$, SD = 1.10) and Low self esteem due to inability to pay fees. On the whole, a grand mean value (2.91, SD = 1.04) was obtained

which suggests that students agreed that the commercialization of education has a negative impact on higher education students in South-South Nigeria.

Table 3: Students’ perceived commercialization of higher education based on level of study

| Level of Study | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Non-Degree | 141 | 23.49 | 8.52 |
| Degree | 264 | 24.91 | 8.42 |
| Post-Graduate | 93 | 31.43 | 8.61 |

The result in Table 3 on students’ perceived commercialization of higher education based on level of study, revealed that mean scores were higher for post-graduate students (\bar{X} =31.43, SD = 8.61), degree students (\bar{X} = 24.91, SD = 8.42) and non-degree students (\bar{X} =23.49, SD = 8.52), respectively. The result indicated that there is a higher negative perception on the commercialization of higher education among post-graduate students, followed by degree students and lastly non-degree students.

Table 4: ANOVA of students’ perceived commercialization of higher education based on level of study

| Source of Var. | SSQ | DF | Mean Square | F | Sig |
|----------------|-----------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Bet G | 11497.786 | 2 | 5973.89 | 224.38 | .000 |
| Within G | 13152.384 | 494 | 26.624 | | |
| Total | 24650.170 | 497 | | | |

Table 4 shows the analysis of variance, $F(2, 496) = 224.38, p = .000$, further indicated that there is a significant difference in the perception of students on commercialization of higher education in South-South Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. A post-hoc test was further conducted as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Post-Hoc multiple comparison test on the perception of students on the commercialization of education based on level of study

| Compared groups | Absolute mean diff | P-value |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Non-Degree and Degree | 1.42 | 0.108 |
| Non-Degree and PG | 7.94 | 0.000 |
| Degree and PG | 6.52 | 0.000 |

The post-hoc multiple comparison test in Table 5, on students’ perceived commercialization of education based on level of study, indicated a mean difference of 1.42, $p = 0.108$ between non-degree and bachelor students, 7.94, $p = 0.001$ between non-degree and post-graduate students, and 6.52, $p = 0.001$ between bachelor and post-graduate students respectively. This result affirmed that there is no significant difference between the perception of non-degree and bachelor students, while there was a

significant difference between the perception of non-degree and PG students, and between bachelor and PG students. This result therefore aver that Post Graduate students’ experience a significantly higher level of educational commercialization compared to undergraduates and non-degree students.

Table 6: Independent samples t-test on the impact commercialization of education on students’ based on mode of study

| Mode of study | n | Mean | SD | Df | T | P | Decision |
|---------------|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|--------|-------------|
| Regular | 373 | 23.95 | 8.20 | 496 | 6.159 | 0.0001 | Significant |
| Part-Time | 125 | 29.27 | 8.81 | | | | |

The result in Table 6 on the impact of perceived commercialization of higher education on students’ based on mode of study, indicated that mean scores were higher for students on part-time mode of study (\bar{X} =29.27, SD = 8.81) than students’ on regular mode of study (\bar{X} =23.95,SD = 8.20). Furthermore, the independent t-test, $t(496) = 6.16$, $p < 0.0001$, showed that there is a significant difference in students’ perceived impact of commercialization of higher education based on mode of study. This result therefore suggests that part-time students reported a higher level of educational commercialization compared to regular students. The null hypotheses was therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION

The result obtained from the data analysis showed that students had a negative perception on the commercialization of higher education in South-South Nigeria. The students agreed that commercialization of higher education makes education very expensive. This is attributed to arbitrary upward review of tuition and other charges in addition to the fact that students are mandated to make payments throughout the semester even after paying the required school fees and other statutory charge. Also, the students reported that high acceptance fee on admission offer makes access to higher education in South-South, Nigeria difficult as it appears that education is for the highest bidders with those who do not have the resources are denied admittance.

Furthermore, the result showed that post-graduate students experience a significantly higher level of educational commercialization compared to undergraduates and non-degree students. This result could be attributed to the fact that most post graduate programmes are conducted with internally generated funds as such the programmes are self-sustaining unlike undergraduate programmes where funding is subsidized by the government. The result of this study is a further testament to the observation made by Nwadiokwu (2018) that commercialization of education contributes to limiting access to disadvantaged students who might not be able to afford the increased cost of a commercialized educational system. Similarly, Osaat and Jack (2020) stated that commercialization of education goes against the principle of profit maximization, and only concentrate power and wealth in the hands of the rich or elite in the society.

Secondly, the result also showed that commercialization of education had a negative impact on students. The findings revealed that students agreed that commercialization of education encourages high rate of students’ drop out, forces students into unethical practices to raise funds, maladjustment of students to academic activities due to concerns in meeting financial obligations, decreased level of accountability among higher institution administrators and management, high rate of examination malpractice among students due to fear of failure and consequently paying extra fees, high rate of truancy among students who combine work and schooling to sustain the financial

demands of their academic programme, uncertainty in academic standing, poor access to education for qualified and intelligent students and low self-esteem. These findings are related to the research on the impact of loans collected by indigent students to fund their higher education in some developed countries. The findings reported by Sweet, et al (2014) adduced students' loan and debt are significantly associated with higher levels of stress, depression, and poorer self-reported general health. Similarly, Ikpesu (2018) averred that with the regular and unabated increase in tuition fees and other sundry charges in Nigerian universities there is the possibility that many students might be experiencing mental health challenges.

The findings also revealed that students noted that commercialization of higher education creates excessive workload on academic staff due to population explosion in diverse programmes. This result is not surprising but expected based on the observation of this researcher and previous reports by scholars. When students perceive that the major focus of the school is on financial gain and profit maximization, they tend to lose interest in learning and instead engage in unethical practices to raise money. This confirms the observation by Ibrahim (2008) who averred that the high rate of commercialization of education has led to a decadence in the educational sector with many young ladies taking to prostitution as a result of the failed education sector." On the result that commercialization of education limits access to education for qualified and intelligent students, Du Beat (2018) opined that commercialization of education will not only result in fee hike, but will also lead to an exclusive admission procedure which is likely to exacerbate the existing social and economic disparity between regions and state.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion drawn from this study is that students perceive commercialization of higher education as having a negative impact on their learning, academic achievement, mental and psychological wellbeing. From the result, students across all levels of higher education perceive commercialization of higher education as not only detrimental to their learning and psychological wellbeing, but it also limits access and retention in higher education for those who do not have the financial means to pay for the ever increasing cost of education, even in public higher institutions. Based on these conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Higher education administrators should be more creative in generate funds. This could be done through patency of research breakthroughs and collaboration with donor agencies/ cooperate organizations on sponsorship/partnership of research that would raise resources for sustainable development of programmes and infrastructure in higher institutions rather than depending majorly on students and government for the generation of funds.
2. Higher institution academic calendar should be restructured to run from January to July to enable students take advantage of the long vacation to seek for jobs before the resumption to school. This would enable them generate funds to support their financial responsibilities.
3. Government at the State and Federal level as well as cooperate organizations should channel more resources towards scholarships and bursary allocations especially to support indigent students.
4. Management of higher institutions in the South-South should hire indigent students to work on campus on part time basis to enable them fund their education.
5. Higher institutions should adopt policies on payment schedule that would allow students who cannot pay their fees enbulk, to pay in installments based on a specified time frame. Hence,

- Surcharges and penalty on students who are unable to pay their fees as at when due should be scrapped.
6. Fees paid to access some institution portals should be scrapped, students should have access to such portals using their identification or matriculation numbers. While bank charges should be restricted to the total amount of fees paid.
 7. Higher institutions in South–South Nigeria, should be proactive on issues concerning students’ mental health by setting up counselling services at registration points. this would enable both fresh and returning students seek counsel early on thorny issues in order to forestall mental breakdown.
 8. Finally, government should adhere strictly to the 26 percent budgetary recommendations of the United Nations Education and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). If and when this is done, it is likely to reduce the current incidence of commercialization of education in Nigeria.

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