

# Funding of Special Education in a Depressed Economy: Sociological Perspective

Mairo, Danjuma, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>, Halima Sarkinfada, Ph.D<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kebbi State University Aleiro, Aliero, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

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\*Corresponding author: Halima Sarkinfada

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

## Abstract

Funding is very critical for the sustainability of special education. Funding aids in the realization of special educational objectives. Funding of special education is affected under depressed economy. This paper looked at the concept of funding, concept of depressed economics and the concept of alternatives sources. This paper also discussed various alternatives sources of funding options available for special education in a depressed economy. Relying on secondary data that were collected from print and online publications, the paper identified public private partnerships (PPPs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international development agencies, community partnership, donations from individuals and charitable organisations, endowment funds, old boy association partnership as some of the alternatives sources of funding available for funding of special education in a depressed economy. Based on this, the paper recommended that special education managers should embrace public private partnerships (PPPs) model, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) strategy, international development agencies strategy, community partnership strategy, donations from individuals and charitable organisations strategy, endowment funds strategy and old boy association partnership strategy to raise more fund to administer the special education institutions in the economy depressed era.

**Keywords:** Depressed Economy, Funding, Special Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Funds refer to monies or financial resources. Funds can also be defined as capital. Funding is the act of providing financial resources for the execution of a projects or programme. Funding is the process of releasing money for the implementation of a programme. Funding is the financial resources made available for the carrying out of a projects. Funding which represents financial resources plays a vital role in the development of educational institutions. Therefore, the funding of education is a vital area of Economics of Education (Gambo, & Fasanmi, 2019). Onojerena, (2018) asserted that financing of education cuts across all aspects of funding of education, this include sources of fund. Finance is one of the important resources that are needed for the day-today running of education; in fact, finance is the live wire of other available resources in education. Its importance cannot be over stressed because no organization can carry-out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal. Money is needed to pay staff, build good structures,

provide infrastructures and learning aid, standard classrooms, laboratories for teaching and research, library etc. Education financing therefore, is seen as the process of sourcing, allocating and managing funds of public revenue in the production of educational services for the attainment of desired objectives and it also help to determine the extent of the number of employees and schools system for the efficient and effective production of educational services (Onojerena,2018).

Federal, state and local government educational institutions in Nigeria are funded by the various government. Private educational institutions are funded by private individuals. Onojerena, (2018) concluded that sources of financing Education in Nigeria includes; Budgetary Allocation, Tuition Fees, Industrial Organization, Philanthropists, communities, old students association/Alumni associations, parents teachers association (P.T.A), religious organizations, school revenue Yielding Ventures, Education Tax Fund (E. T. F), sale of school farm Produce, e.t.c. Also, Odufowokan (2007), other sources available to education financing in

Nigeria are basically three, these are the public authorities, the user of education and self-generated income while Adeyemi (2011) suggested other sources of financing education in Nigeria. Such suggestions include the raising bank loans for capital development, introduction of property tax, donations from endowment, donations from parents/teachers associations, education tax, development levy, taxes from lotteries to finance education and donations from alumni associations. NOUN (2012) government is a major financier of education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria educational institutions are always faced with the challenges of adequate funding. This problem is cut across all the forms of educational institutions such as the tertiary institutions, secondary schools and the basic education which include the Special education. Onlinenigeria, (2007) and Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia (2014) noted that inadequate funding for educational services is a major problem of implementing meaningful inclusive programmes for persons with special needs in Nigeria. Also, onlinenigeria, (2007) observed that though, the government accepted full responsibility for adequate financial provision to guarantee successful implementation of inclusive education as stated in the Nigeria National Policy on Education's document. As of now, there is no clear indication of special funding arrangement for the implementation of inclusive education in the country (onlinenigeria, 2007). Poor or low funding leads to poor implementation of the existing policies for persons with special needs. The shortage of funds leads to shortage of resources, inadequate facilities, unemployment of personnel etc. For persons with disabilities to receive adequate supports, inclusiveness, required materials and resources etc funding will play prominent roles (Rufus *et al.*, 2014).

Ogunode, Jegede, Ajape (2020) maintained that inadequate funding is an enormous problem preventing effective administration of special needs education programme in Federal Capital Territory, (FCT). The allocation released for implementing the special needs education programme annually is not adequate to implement the programme. Inadequate funding is a problem facing the entire educational system in Nigeria. The federal, states government and local government are not will to implement the recommendation of 26% UNESCO for educational sector administration in all the developing countries. This inability of the government at every level to implement the recommendation is affecting the administration of education, especially the special needs education programme. Nwoagba (2013) identified funding as the major constraint and barrier to the growth of special needs education in Nigeria. He went further submitted that coordination of services and offering individual supports to children with special needs demand additional money and inadequate funding hinders professional development in special needs education. In most cases, the administrators of special

needs education do not access the fund for special needs, making the children with special needs to suffer unnecessarily in the areas of infrastructure, equipment and learning materials Musa & Ogunode (2021) acknowledged special education and education in Nigeria are poor funded due to many factors. Ogunode, Onyekachi, & Ayoko (2023) identified poor implementation of national policy on funding of education, subsidy payment, debt servicing, corruption, insecurity problems, fall in national revenue and revenue loss as barriers to investment in education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Attah, & Ebute (2023) also pointed to debt servicing. Bello (1998) discovered that government cannot meet up with the cost of education at this era of economic depression and high inflation as a result of increase in student's enrolments, staff emolument and cost of providing infrastructures (Onojerena 2018). Depression in economics is an economic situation whereby there is high rate of inflation and high rate of unemployment. It is important to examine the various alternative options for the funding of special education in Nigeria.

### Concept of Depressed Economy

Britannica (2022) viewed depression in economics, as a major downturn in the business cycle characterized by sharp and sustained declines in economic activity; high rates of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness; increased rates of personal and business bankruptcy; massive declines in stock market; and great reductions in international trade and capital movements. A depression may also be defined as a particularly severe and long-lasting form of recession where the latter is generally understood, relative to a national economy, as a period of at least two consecutive quarters of decline in real (inflation-adjusted) GDP, gross domestic product. Economic depression is "a particularly severe period of economic weakness" that is commonly understood to last from the onset of economic decline to the return of normal economic activity.

Two major factors characterize economic depression. Consumer confidence falls dramatically as people begin to worry about their job security and pull back on spending. And, investments decrease as businesses and individuals stop investing, whether that means building a new factory, developing a new product, or buying stocks. Economic factors that characterize a depression include A substantial increase in unemployment, A drop in available credit from banks, Diminishing output and productivity, Consistent negative GDP growth, bankruptcies, debt defaults, Reduced trade and global commerce, Falling currency values, Low to no inflation, or even deflation and An increased savings rate (among those who still have money to save). Economists disagree on the duration of a depression. Some argue that a depression encompasses only the period that is plagued by declining economic activity. Other economists argue that the depression continues up until the point that most economic activity

has returned to normal (Britannica 2022; Ogunode *et al.*, 2023).

Economic depression according to Ogunode & Ukozo (2023b) is a period of sharp and sustained decline in economic activity that typically includes negative gross domestic product growth and a substantial rise in unemployment, poverty and homelessness. During economic depressions, the stock market drops significantly, and there is a large uptick in personal and business bankruptcies. There is no universal definition of an economic depression, but some commonly used criteria include more than a 10% drop in GDP, around a 20% unemployment rate and a prolonged economic downturn that lasts more than one or two years.

Ogunode (2023) observed that economic depression affects every sector of the economy including educational institutions. Education institutions are mostly affected by economic depression because of the large financial resources needed to finance the sector. Educational institutions in Nigeria get large sums of their funding from the government. The reduction in government revenue during the economic depression affected educational institutions' funding. The national downturn in the economy has made it more difficult for the government to fund public education alone. Onojerena (2018) noted that economic depression is more felt in a developing and third world countries whose economy even in the best of time have been very vulnerable. The economy is characterized by the following:

1. An economy that does not support the minimum wages ensuring level required for basic living
2. An economy with high rate/level of unemployment.
3. An economy with low industrial utilization
4. An economy with low level of social security.
5. An economy with a high child mortality rate.
6. An economy with low life expectancy
7. An economy with poor social infrastructure
8. Finally, it is an economy with little or no funds for education. Economic depression affects all forms of education including special education.

### Concept of Special Education

Special Needs Education is an organized education for special needs people. The National policy on Special Needs Education (2015), defined Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Services (SNERS) as a formal Education given to Persons with Special Needs. It is tailored towards Individualized Educational Programme (IEP). It is rendered at school, home and hospital bound settings and can be classified into three categories: Persons with Disabilities at-risk children/youth and Gifted and Talented Children/Youth. Obani (2004), viewed Special Education as the education that is concerned with children who have been adversely affected to a greater extent by one or more of these factors. Special Education deals with children with

special learning problems, difficulties and needs. It applies special methods and uses special equipment that takes the special problem of the children into consideration. Obani (2004), noted that Special Education looks beyond the ordinary methods and provision of the conventional school system in order to tackle the problems affecting the handicapped child's ability to learn effectively. Special education is "Child Centered and not Subject Centered". NOUN (2013) special education is designed to help the exceptional children (both the gifted and the disabled individuals) in making the maximum use of their capabilities in order to contribute their quota to the socio-economic development of their country.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) defined Special Needs Education (SNE) as the: Education of children and adult who have learning difficulties because of the different kinds of handicaps – blindness, partial – sightedness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, limb deformation or malformation etc; due to circumstances of birth, inheritance, social position, mental and physical health patterns, or accident later in life. As a result such children and adult are unable to cope with the regular school class organization and methods.

Special needs education in the above definition is a formal, special educational training given to the people (children and adults) with special needs, who fall into two categories: *the disabled* and the *gifted and talented*. The disabled include the children and adult with hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical and health impairment, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, multiple handicap... emotional disturbance. On the other hand, the gifted and talented are in other end of the spectrum of special needs (Rufus, Jummai, Suraju, & Eucharia 2014).

According to Mark (2015), the objectives of special education include: to protect each student's condition from further aggravation by arranging a programme of activities within his limitations to correct or ease the student's remediable weaknesses or misalignments, to assist the student in understanding and accepting his own limitations, to develop the best possible organic vigor or condition in view of the individual's limitations, to develop skill and knowledge of recreational sports and games suitable or adaptable to the individual's limitation, to develop the student's knowledge of and appreciation of good body mechanics and efficiency, to help students make satisfactory social and emotional adjustments to problems imposed by their disabilities, to help students gain securities through improved function and increased ability to meet the physical demands of daily living.

The objectives of Special Needs Education according to National policy on Special Needs Education (2015), includes: to take care of total service delivery of

the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child, irrespective of setting (school, home and hospital), to provide adequate and qualitative education for all Persons with Special Needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavours, to ensure that all Persons with Special Needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nation's socioeconomic and technological development.

### **Concept of Alternative Sources of Funding**

Ogunode (2023b) viewed alternative sources of funding as different means institutions can use to raise funds for the running of the institutions. Alternative Sources of funding refer to all legal avenues institutions can use to generate funds for the development of the institutions. Alternative Sources of funding are non-conventional means of raising funds for the institutions. Alternative Sources of funding according to Onyeche (2018) refer to persons, organisations, places/areas, avenues or means of raising or generating money other than the popular conventional means to finance public university education. The sources involve careful planning and processes aimed at getting substantial income from specific persons or groups (s) of people or activities. Alternative fund sources are new and innovative sources of revenue. Many countries of the world, especially the advanced nations, do not depend on the Government for their funding. They employ alternative sources in addition to conventional sources.

Some of the alternatives options for available for funding of special education in a depressed economy include; public private partnerships (PPPs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international development agencies, community partnership, donations from individuals and charitable organisations, endowment funds, old boy association partnership.

### **Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) is one of the alternative funding option available for funding of special needs education in a depressed economy. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) according to Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie (2023) is an official agreement between two or more parties on the provision of services or projects with a defined operational, profit sharing ratio, terms and conditions and ownership tenure. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) can be seen as a formal arrangement and agreement between public institutions and private individuals on funding of infrastructure, provision of services and donation of facilities with defined and spelt out policies on sharing formula of assets, profits and ownership. The objectives of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) according to Ogunode *et al.*, (2023) include; ensuring the provision of quality services to the citizens, ensuring accountability and transparency in resource utilization, improving business efficiency and effectiveness in public sector service delivery; reducing and avoid the full privatization of public service and goods, to allow governments to retain ownership

while contracting the private sector firm to carry out a specific function such as designing, building, maintaining and operating infrastructures like roads, bridges and ports, or providing basic services like health, water, waste disposal and electricity. Ogunode & Obiakor (2023) listed various public-private partnership funding model options available for the funding of universities in Nigeria which include; Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT), Design, Build, Finance, Own (DFBO), Design, Build, Operate and Transfer (DBOT), Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT), Rehabilitate, Operate and Transfer (ROT), Joint Development Agreement (JDA), Operation and Maintenance (OM), Management/Lease Contract, Outsourcing, Leasing Contract, divestiture and concession as PPP funding options available to transfer funds into the universities. Special education managers and administrators can select any of the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) model to raise funds for the development of special education in Nigeria.

### **Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

Another option available for managers and administrators of special education to raise funds is to explore the various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) residing in Nigeria to raise funds. According to NOUN (2013) the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are entities, usually international and non-profit making organisations, which work in an independent fashion and play complementary role with government for the benefit of society. The approach of NGOs ranges from lobbying and advocacy to operations and project-oriented organisations. Since becoming players in the international economic development world in the early 1980s, NGOs have proliferated in both developed and developing countries. On the other hand, foundations are institutions through which private wealth is contributed and distributed for public purposes. They are institutions financed by charitable contributions or endowments and can either be for profit or non-profit entities, depending on the manner in which their money is invested and managed. Foundations generally grant funds to certain causes in keeping with their mandate and mission. In the case of education, Foundations often supplement the public provision of finance for education, specifically channeling funds to needy or privileged few in a population. The board of a given Foundation establishes the grant-making policies from which the programming agenda is then derived. Foundations provide grant money to a variety of organisations, including non-profit making NGOs, universities and schools.....argued that school administrators can partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to raise funds and aids to sustain the educational institutions across the country.

### **International Development Agencies**

International Development Agencies are another avenue to raise funds for special education during a depressed economy. NOUN (2013) noted that international development agencies are governmental



organisations established between or among different nations to fulfill certain obligations based on mutual understanding. Such organisations can either be that of a particular country or agencies of the United Nations. For example, the United States Government or the Swedish Government could establish development agencies in Nigeria based on bilateral agreements between either of these two countries. These agencies may not be established in any other country besides Nigeria, as long as that country does not enter into any bilateral relationship with either the United States of America or Sweden. On the contrary, other development agencies of the United Nations are replicated in other countries, as long as that particular country is a member of the United Nations. Thus International Development Agencies are agencies of government or that of an association of comity of nations. Ogunode *et al.*, (2023) submitted that international development agencies can help educational institutions in different ways such as provision of technical assistance and given tem aids. NOUN (2013) acknowledge some international development agencies can give financial aid too.

### **Community Partnership**

Special education administrators and managers can also collaborates with host communities to raise funds for the management of special education institutions across the country. NOUN (2012) asserted that communities do provide funds for education. They do this indirectly in the sense that they set up school buildings, which is handed over to the government to administer. They also provide desks and chairs and other equipment necessary for effective running of the school. Their efforts are always appreciated by the heads of schools in such locality and the government. Fund raising activities is a common feature of most communities particularly in the southern parts of the country. In most cases funds are raised through launching ceremonies or during some community festivals. Most fund raising activities are usually very successful because of their political nature and the kinds of people (politicians, businessmen, government officials and industrialists) that are invited.

### **Donations from Individuals and Charitable Organisations**

The option of donations from individuals and charitable organisations can also be used to raise funds for the management of various special education institutions across the country. Manager of special education institutions can seek the donation from the general public support the institutions. NOUN (2012) noted that Philanthropic individuals and charitable organizations do donate money for the importation of science equipment, provision of relevant instructional materials and construction of classroom blocks in schools. At times, donations are in thousands or millions of naira. It is important to note that some of the donations are made by individuals and organizations from the information they gather on the progress of the school. It

is on record that products of some institutions make donations based on their first-hand information concerning the situation of things in the.

### **Endowment Funds**

Endowment fund can also be institutionalized in all the special education institutions to ensure sustainable funding sources for the institutions. NOUN (2012) submitted tat endowment fund represent money, property, etc. given to a school or an educational institution to help it solve some of its pressing financial problems. Very rich Nigerians, voluntary organizations, commercial or industrial firms and concerns should contribute money by 'ray of endowment to help increase the revenue of not only the Universities but also primary and secondary schools. Donations and endowments have come to secondary schools and university levels of education by rich Nigerians such as Late Chief Moshood Abiola, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, Dr M.T. Mbu, just to mention a few. One note of encouragement as Ekpo (1992) mentioned is that endowment funds are very highly progressive as it depends on the good will of donors. It is also easy to administer. If well planned, it can increase the revenue base of our universities. Endowment funds should be used for capital projects and not on frivolous things. Some notable endowment funds were made to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. For example, the endowment of a chair in open heart surgery in our College of Medicine by the First Bank of Nigeria PLC. Another one is the endowment of Eze Akanu Ibism Professional Chair of Business ethics in the Faculty of Business Administration, Enugu Campus, by the Havard Business School Association of Nigeria (HBSAN).

### **The sociological perspective**

This refers to perspective on human life, social interaction between individuals and groups, and the educational institutions and how these are conditioned by social structures or a society as a whole, and how social interaction in turn maintains or transforms these social conditions as they affects a deposed economy especially Adult learners. Sociological perspectives may focus on people's attitudes, beliefs, values, ways of feeling and acting in social space, but also on social institutions, relations and organizations, or race and ethnicity, social class, and gender. Sociology is a general social science that focuses on broad questions such as the nature of social action and complex interplay between social structures and agency, causes and consequences of social struggles, preconditions of social order, how societies evolve and change over time and specially education agenda for the new government in a depressed economy in Nigeria. There are several key sociological traditions and multiple theories that aim to provide fruitful insights in these topics. One way to categorize the issues of special education. Poor or low funding leads to poor implementation of the existing policies for persons with special needs. The shortage of funds leads to shortage of resources, inadequate facilities, unemployment of personnel etc. For persons with disabilities to receive

adequate supports, inclusiveness, required materials and resources and the need to have been a vexed

The primary aim of setting up special education centres all over the world is to produce intellectuals, and individuals with formal academic orientation. That leads to social and economic understanding of issues of life that affects interrelationship and communal functions within the educational system. The functionalist which argue that education is an important social institution that helps meet the needs of society and maintain stability. We are all part of the same social class, and education performs the function of creating a sense of identity by teaching core values and allocating roles. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation and broadly focuses on the social structures that shape society as a whole. Which make them independent to perpetuate inequality in the society which coincide with the conflict perspective emphasizes that education reinforces inequality in the larger society. While symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on social interaction in the classroom, on school playgrounds, and at other school-related venues as it affects funding of special education in Nigeria.

### Old Boy Association Partnership

Substantial funds can also be raised by administrators of special education in Nigeria through old association partnership to support the funding of special education institutions in Nigeria. Old boy association are groups of people that graduated from a particular institution that come together with the aims of providing financial and technical assistance to the school or institutions where they graduated from.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The survival of special education depends on provision of adequate funding. Funding is very critical for the sustainability of special education. Funding aids in the realization of special educational objectives. Funding of special education is affected under a depressed economy. To possibly help the administrators of special education to ensure sustainable funding for special education, the paper recommended that special education managers should embrace public private partnerships (PPPs) model, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) strategy, international development agencies strategy, community partnership strategy, donations from individuals and charitable organisations strategy, endowment funds strategy and old boy association partnership strategy to raise more funds to administer the special education institutions in the economy depressed era.

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