



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE NEXUS BETWEEN INNOVATIVE FUNDING TECHNIQUES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PRIVATE SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between innovative funding techniques and the sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the research. A correlational research design was employed, with the population comprising 381 private secondary school administrators in Cross River State. Using a purposive sampling technique, a sample of 281 school administrators were included in the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Innovative Funding Techniques and Sustainability of Secondary Education Questionnaire (IFTSPSEQ). The instrument's face and content validity were established by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Reliability was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding reliability coefficients of .81 and .83. The null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The results revealed a significant relationship between crowdfunding and the revitalization of business ventures and the sustainability of secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study concluded that innovative funding techniques, such as crowdfunding and business venture revitalization, are critical for enhancing the sustainability of private secondary education in the state. These findings emphasize the importance of adopting diversified funding strategies to address financial constraints, reduce dependency on government allocations, and enhance the quality and resilience of secondary education systems. It is recommended that private school administrators integrate crowdfunding into their financial techniques by leveraging platforms that engage stakeholders such as alumni, parents, and community members. This approach will enable schools to secure additional funds for infrastructure, teaching resources, and educational programs.

Keywords: Innovative, funding, techniques, sustainability, private secondary education.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Secondary education which can be acquired either in a private or public system is the form of education that students acquire after primary education and before tertiary education is intended for people between the ages of 12-17 years. As a critical phase of the Nigerian educational system, it is expected to provide the students with the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly evolving world in line with the broad goals of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013; Obona et al., 2024). These goals include the preparation of students for useful living and for higher education attainment, among others. Etor et al. (2019) mentioned that upon graduation, students are expected to be well-prepared with the knowledge and abilities required for further education or employment. Attaining these goals will enhance the sustainability of secondary education both at the state and national level.

The term "sustainability" inherently suggests continuity, emphasizing the capacity to maintain or uphold systems, processes, or outcomes over time without depletion of resources or compromise in quality. In this study, the sustainability of secondary education refers to the capacity to uphold and enhance the quality, accessibility, and relevance of secondary education systems over time. It entails ensuring that educational institutions can address both current and future needs without depleting resources, compromising equity, or lowering standards. It refers to ensuring that all programs and activities within the secondary school system remain effective and capable of addressing the current needs of students while safeguarding the ability to meet the needs of future generations (Igbokwe & Oteh, 2018; Obona et al., 2021).

One of the goals of secondary education, aligned with the tenets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is to ensure that all learners have free access to equitable and quality education. This can be achieved by equipping learners with the necessary tools for success and by fostering the willingness and capacity of nations to strengthen the education sector (Bourn et al., 2017; Culala & Vinuya, 2020). Sustainable secondary education can be evaluated through dimensions such as economic, social, quality teaching, learning facilities, school environment, and the relevance of curriculum contents to the learners (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020). Education for sustainability involves the practice of learning how to build sustainable communities at both global and local levels (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020; Obona et al., 2021).

Economic sustainability emphasizes securing consistent and sufficient funding for schools by leveraging innovative strategies like public-private collaborations and efficient resource management, ensuring affordability and removing financial barriers. Social sustainability focuses on promoting equity and inclusion by providing quality education for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or abilities, while addressing urban-rural inequalities and fostering active community involvement. Environmental sustainability involves promoting mutual respect, building friendships, improving infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning, and integrating environmental education into the curriculum to prepare students for future challenges. Ameh et al. (2018) argued that the attainment of sustainable secondary education goals requires a conducive and supportive learning environment, availability of facilities and relevant curricula, which will enhanced students' attitudes toward sustainable learning.



Another crucial dimension of a sustainable secondary education system is the relevance of curriculum content to the needs of learners. A curriculum is considered relevant when it provides practical value and benefits to students. Akpan and Onabe (2016) argue that when a curriculum aligns with students' current lives and future aspirations, it fosters greater interest and engagement in learning. Together, these dimensions establish a well-rounded framework for a resilient and sustainable secondary education system.

Given the aforementioned indicators of sustainability, some parents and stakeholders have expressed growing concern about the poor state of secondary schools in Nigeria, which undermines the quality of teaching, learning, and overall outcomes. Researchers argue that the education system has failed to adequately equip students with the essential knowledge, skills, and capacity needed for productivity, citing inadequate infrastructure, insufficient learning facilities, and poorly equipped libraries as major contributing factors (Irikana & Weli, 2019). Consequently, this has resulted in the production of graduates with minimal practical, technical, and basic skills, rendering them ill-equipped to contribute effectively to sustainable national development.

Stakeholders have criticized the secondary education curriculum for being overly theoretical and lacking sufficient vocational training. This deficiency leaves students ill-equipped to address social challenges, integrate productively into society, or transition to higher education without significant parental support (Ige, 2013; Omoregie in Edet & Asuquo, 2019; Ajiboye & Olorunda in Chuktu, 2021). Similarly, Anufuro (2013) emphasizes that employers prioritize candidates who possess essential life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective reasoning. Unfortunately, many secondary school graduates lack these competencies, limiting their employability and reducing their contributions to society. Furthermore, Osha et al. (2021) highlight that rising levels of unmanageable work stress among teachers negatively impact the quality of education, thereby hindering sustainable development.

Observations in private secondary schools in Cross River State reveal a shortage of qualified teachers, further exacerbating the problem. Many teachers are overburdened with excessive workloads, often handling multiple subjects, managing classrooms, marking attendance registers, assigning and assessing students' homework, among other responsibilities. These overwhelming tasks reduce their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering quality education. As a result, many secondary school graduates, lacking the necessary skills, struggle to further their education or secure meaningful employment, with some resorting to criminal activities. These challenges threaten the sustainability of the education system. A major constraint in this sector is inadequate funding, as many private schools primarily rely on student tuition and fees for financial support. Achieving sustainable and high-quality education requires substantial and consistent funding to address these critical issues.

Funding, which involves sourcing the necessary resources without solely relying on government capital and recurrent grants, has been identified as a critical factor in enhancing the quality of education (Ogundele & Danbaba, 2017). However, a major challenge hindering educational development, particularly in secondary schools, is severe underfunding (Ahmed, 2011; Ahmed & Adepoju, 2013). This issue is partly due to the rapid increase in secondary school enrollment in Nigeria, which has exceeded the government's capacity to independently finance educational institutions or meet the United Nations Educational,



Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) recommendation of allocating 26% of the national budget to education (Ekundayo, 2008). Furthermore, the decline in global oil prices, combined with the pressure on the government to fund other sectors of the economy, has further strained the proper financing of education, especially secondary schools in Nigeria (Ahmed & Adepoju cited in Irikana & Weli, 2019). The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) has explicitly acknowledged that education is an expensive social service, and its funding should be a shared responsibility between the Federal, State, and Local governments, as well as the private sector.

There are many sources of funding that every school administrator can utilize to enhance administration. Ugwu and Nnebedum (2018) mentioned agricultural-based income generating activities, alumni consultancies, international aids, tuition gifts, fees, grants and endowment investment income, private business-based income generating activities, parents and community involvement. However, this study is anchored on crowdfunding and revitalization of business ventures as innovative funding techniques. Crowdfunding and the revitalization of business ventures offer innovative revenue sources for schools. Crowdfunding involves pooling small contributions from individuals via platforms to finance projects like building renovations, purchasing teaching materials, or introducing new programs. Meanwhile, revitalizing business ventures entails improving on-campus entrepreneurial activities such as mini-shops, agricultural projects, or vocational services to generate steady income, which can be reinvested in school administration and educational resources.

The government's inability to adequately support private secondary education necessitates that the owners think creatively and explore alternative strategies for generating funds, rather than solely relying on monies generated from tuition and other school charges. Based on this premise, the researchers aim to examine the nexus between innovative funding techniques and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria.

The inadequate financing of education in Nigeria has led to the deteriorated state of schools, insufficient physical facilities, human capital flight, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of up-to-date technological instructional materials. This situation has posed immense difficulties for the effective management of private secondary schools, making the attainment of educational goals increasingly difficult. Students are the most affected, as they are deprived of the quality education and training necessary to become productive and resourceful individuals after graduation. In light of this, it becomes imperative for private school administrators to explore alternative strategies for additional funding. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) has explicitly recognized education as a costly social service and emphasized that its funding is a shared responsibility among the Federal, State, and Local governments, as well as the private sector.

The question arises whether meaningful and sustainable national development can be achieved when students are deprived of essential training due to the lack of modern facilities, instructional resources, and conducive learning environments caused by poor funding. Addressing this persistent issue calls for the development of innovative funding mechanisms for secondary education. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the nexus between innovative funding techniques and sustainability of private secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria.



1.1. Purpose of the study

This study explored the nexus between innovative funding techniques and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the relationship between:

1. Crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education system in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria.

1.2. Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education.
2. There is no significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education system.

1.3. Relevance of the study

The study on can provide significant benefits to private school administrators, teachers and researchers. It may equip them with insights into alternative funding methods that complement traditional sources, enabling more effective financial planning and resource allocation. For teachers, improved funding indirectly impacts their learning environment and personal welfare. Access to better teaching materials, professional training, and development opportunities fosters improved teaching quality. Researchers may also gain from the study as it provides a foundation for further exploration of innovative funding techniques in education. Furthermore, the study serves as a resource for investigating the impact of these funding methods on educational outcomes, contributing to a broader understanding of sustainable education practices.

2.0. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The phrase “innovative funding, alternative funding, and internally generated revenue are sometimes used interchangeably. For instance, according to Stan (2014) innovative funding in education entails that school administrators develop and implement ideas that will help them to depend less on government for funding and instead come up with self-funding as basic condition of survival in the context of a competitive educational reality. For Omur and Argon (2016), it is seen as a conduit of new ideas that school principal put in place to foster creativity through the application of these ideas. Alternative sources of school funding according to Adewunmu (2015) include payment for extra lesson, appeal fund raising, community involvement, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), old student’s association use of direct labour, proceeds from school programmes and donation.

In modern education systems, funding is closely linked to improved performance, with crowdfunding emerging as a novel funding method (Horta et al., 2022). Crowdfunding is an innovative revenue sources for schools. It involves gathering small contributions from the general public to finance projects, goods, or services. Yakubu (2016) describes crowdfunding



as a creative social investment strategy that can sustain Nigeria's educational system through social economics, impact investment, and creative economics. Similarly, Younghwan and Junseok (2018) highlighted the viability of crowdfunding as an alternative funding source, emphasizing that social influence, effort expectancy, and perceived trust significantly influence individuals' willingness to participate. Their findings suggest that crowdfunding operates similarly to donations.

Horta, Meoli, and Vismara (2022) further explored crowdfunding in education, identifying it as an effective means of supplementing traditional funding sources to support learning activities. Their research revealed that institutions with limited resources, particularly universities, are more likely to adopt crowdfunding. Additionally, Akeke et al. (2020) observed that most school principals lack alternative financing strategies. They proposed that principals should diversify funding by engaging in entrepreneurial ventures, such as fisheries, poultry, and other vocational projects, to generate income for their schools.

Revitalization of business ventures offer innovative revenue sources for schools. School principals can also create revenue by establishing and revitalizing on-campus business ventures. This entails improving on-campus entrepreneurial activities such as mini-shops, agricultural projects, or vocational services to generate steady income, which can be reinvested in school administration and educational resources. For instance, setting up mini-shops to sell consumables to students, parents, and the public can be a sustainable income source. Nyeh and Kpee (2019) suggested that principals, in collaboration with school staff, could offer commercial services to both the school community and the public at agreed rates, boosting school revenue. A study by Amaechina et al. (2020) investigated alternative funding for secondary education in the Enugu education zone. Using a stratified random sampling technique, the study involved 116 principals (61 urban and 55 rural) from public secondary schools. Data collected through questionnaires indicated that community contributions, such as erecting school structures, play a significant role in funding secondary schools.

Although several studies have been conducted on funding, internally generated Revenue (IGR) and Sustainability of Education, such as Ukpong and Uzoigwe (2020); Irikana and Weli (2019); Ameh et al. (2018); Banka (2019); Bua and Adzongo (2014); Chadamoyo and Dumbu (2012); Nwogu and Moses (2020); Nyeh and Kpee (2019); Ogundele and Danbaba (2017); and Ugwu and Nnebedum (2018), there seems to be no research conducted yet particularly on innovative funding and private secondary education sustainability in Cross River State. This necessitated a study to establish the relationship existing between innovative funding techniques and private secondary education sustainability. Therefore, the present study filled the gap in knowledge by investigating the relationship between innovative finding techniques and private secondary education sustainability in Cross River State, Nigeria.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in private secondary schools across Cross River State, Nigeria. The state capital is Calabar, comprising eighteen (18) Local Government Areas. Geographically, Cross River State is positioned at a latitude of 4.9757° North and a longitude of 8.3417° East. It is a coastal region within the Niger Delta, covering an area of 20,156 square kilometers (Cross River State Government, 2014). As one of the seven states in Nigeria's South-South



geopolitical zone, it is situated in the Middle Belt region. The state shares borders with the Republic of Cameroon to the east, Benue State to the north, Ebonyi and Abia States to the west, and Akwa Ibom State and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

The study adopted correlational research design chosen to investigate the relationship between innovative funding techniques and secondary education sustainability in Cross River State. The population comprised 381 administrators of private secondary schools in Cross River State. Purposive method was adopted in selecting 281 administrators for the study. An 18-items structured questionnaire titled: Innovative Funding Techniques and Sustainability of Secondary Education Questionnaire (IFTSSEQ) was used for data collection on four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The face and content validation of the instrument were determined by three experts in Educational Management, and in Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Some items were modified while irrelevant ones were discarded. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability estimate of .79 and .83 was obtained, showing that the instrument was reliable.

The instrument was administered by the researchers directly to the respondents after permission was granted. The researchers recruited five trained research assistants for the exercise. At the end of the entire exercise, all the copies of the instruments were retrieved, and coded for analysis. Thus, the response rate was 100%. The data generated were coded accordingly and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The result was presented in tables.

4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Presentation of Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyze this hypothesis as presented in Table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficients between crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for sustainability of secondary education ($r = .61, p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of sustainability of private secondary education. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State.



Table 1: Summary of descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	r	Sig.
Crowdfunding technique	281	10.80	2.318	279	.61**	.000
Sustainability of private secondary education		10.25	2.071			

*Significant at $p < .05$

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyze this hypothesis as presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for sustainability of private secondary education ($r = .58$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of sustainability of private secondary education. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	R	Sig.
Revitalization of business ventures technique	281	10.56	2.348	279	.58**	.000
Sustainability of private secondary education		10.25	2.071			

*Significant at $p < .05$

4.2. Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between crowdfunding technique and sustainability of private secondary education. This



suggests that crowdfunding serves as an effective supplement to traditional funding methods, helping to bridge financial gaps that impede educational progress. The results indicate that school administrators engaged the wider community, including alumni, parents, and other stakeholders, to contribute small amounts, which significantly supported infrastructure, teaching resources, and program implementation in schools. The implication is that school administrators should actively incorporate crowdfunding into their financial strategies. This approach not only diversifies revenue streams but also promotes community involvement, thereby strengthening the sustainability and quality of private secondary education systems. The finding aligns with Yakubu (2016), who described crowdfunding as a creative social investment tool for sustaining the Nigerian educational system through social economics, impact investment, and creative economics. It also corresponds with the conclusions of Younghwan and Junseok (2018), who identified crowdfunding as a viable and innovative funding alternative.

The result of hypothesis two revealed a statistically significant relationship between revitalization of business ventures technique and sustainability of private secondary education. This indicates that school administrators actively promoted entrepreneurial initiatives within their schools, such as mini-shops, agricultural projects, and vocational services, which provided dependable supplementary income to tackle funding challenges. The results suggest that effectively managing and enhancing these ventures can help schools generate additional revenue to support infrastructure, acquire teaching resources, and improve overall operational efficiency. This highlights the need for schools to prioritize the development and revitalization of income-generating ventures as a sustainable financial strategy. The findings align with Nyeh and Kpee (2019), who emphasized that principals, in collaboration with school staff, can offer commercial services to both the public and school community at agreed rates. For instance, principals can establish mini-shops to sell consumables to students, parents, and the public, generating extra revenue for school administration. Additionally, the findings support Amaechina et al. (2020), who highlighted the importance of community contributions, such as constructing school structures, in funding secondary education.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study concludes that innovative funding techniques, such as crowdfunding and the revitalization of business ventures, play a significant role in ensuring the sustainability of private secondary education in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between these funding techniques and the sustainability of private secondary schools. Crowdfunding effectively supplements traditional funding by involving stakeholders like alumni, parents, and the community, providing crucial support for infrastructure, teaching resources, and program implementation. Similarly, the revitalization of business ventures within schools generates additional revenue, enhancing financial independence and operational efficiency. These results underscore the importance of adopting innovative and diversified funding strategies to address financial challenges, reduce reliance on government allocations, and improve the quality and resilience of private secondary education systems.



5.2. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that:

1. Private school administrators should incorporate crowdfunding into their financial strategies by utilizing platforms that involve stakeholders like alumni, parents, and community members, enabling schools to raise extra funds for infrastructure, teaching resources, and educational programs.
2. Private schools should focus on developing and improving entrepreneurial ventures, such as mini-shops, agricultural initiatives, and vocational services, to generate additional revenue. Principals, in collaboration with staff, should manage these ventures effectively, reinvesting the earnings into school resources and infrastructure, thereby decreasing dependence on government funding and enhancing operational efficiency.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this paper.

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