



The Politicization of Establishment of Universities in Nigeria and the Federal Government's Imposition of a Seven-Year Moratorium: An Overview

VICTOR EKWUKOMA

Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Abuja, Nigeria

OSAGIOBARE EMMANUEL OSAMIRO

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract. The proliferation of universities in Nigeria has been largely driven by political considerations rather than educational needs or national development goals. This trend has resulted in the establishment of new institutions amidst chronic underfunding, infrastructural decay, poor staff welfare, and frequent industrial unrest in existing universities. Despite the critical role of universities in national development—through teaching, research, and community service—the Nigerian higher education sector struggles with overstretched resources, inadequate facilities, brain drain, and declining academic standards. Between 2020 and 2025 alone, 137 new universities were established, pushing the total to 307, many of which were created without proper planning or funding. The Federal Government's recent imposition of a seven-year moratorium on the establishment of new tertiary institutions is thus a welcome corrective measure. This paper examines the historical evolution of universities in Nigeria, highlights the consequences of unchecked expansion, and situates the moratorium within the broader context of university education and national development. It argues that meaningful reform must focus on consolidating and strengthening existing institutions through improved funding, infrastructural development, staff welfare, and rigorous regulatory oversight. The paper concludes that without addressing the systemic issues of underfunding and mismanagement, further expansion will continue to undermine the quality, relevance, and carrying capacity of Nigerian universities.

1. Introduction

Over the years, the establishment of universities in Nigeria has been driven by political, rather than educational and national developmental considerations. The political consideration has led to unnecessary proliferation of universities amidst poor funding of the existing ones. It is difficult to explain why more universities are established by the government whereas the existing public universities are grossly underfunded, poorly equipped and understaffed. In a bid to check the unnecessary proliferation of universities, the Federal Government recently - in year 2025 -decided to impose a seven-year moratorium on the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This paper discusses the issues bedeviling the universities and the seven years moratorium of the government.

1.1 University Education and National Development

According to the National Policy on Education, university education shall make optimum contribution to national development by: (a) intensifying and diversifying its programme for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation; ,(b)making professional course contents to reflect our national requirements; (c)making all students, as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism (FRN, 2004). Universities have three-pronged objectives, which are teaching, research and community development services.

Teaching and learning based on the curriculum are to develop the skills and knowledge of the learners towards the production of high skilled graduates. According to the policy, university teaching shall seek to inculcate community spirit in the students through projects and action research workforce. In terms of research, the National Policy on Education declares that university research shall be relevant to the developmental goals. Hence, universities shall be encouraged to disseminate their results to both government and industries. Voluntary agencies, individuals and groups shall be allowed to establish universities provided they comply with minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government.

The university system in Nigeria has not had a very smooth sail from inception; it has witnessed many successes and challenges (Otonko, 2012). The benefits that Nigeria derives from university education is very clear by considering the five national goals through which Nigeria's philosophy of education draws its strength, namely, to create a democratic and free society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2004).

University education, globally, is society's means of producing its high skilled labour. It is a critical component of human development. It provides not only the high-skills necessary for every labor market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, social scientists, and a myriad of other personnel (Otonko, 2012). It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect entire societies. This function of education can be seen vividly in action in Nigeria. Therefore, according to the provisions of the policy, the goals of tertiary education shall contribute to national development through high skilled labour.

Furthermore, university education in Nigeria has helped to develop many Nigerians into sound and effective citizens. Here, university education, more than any other, has led to higher self-awareness and self-realization of individuals at various tasks, enhanced better human relationships and national consciousness.

Also, the university education system has enhanced social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress in Nigeria. The country is more blessed now with specialists at various fields of endeavour: medicine, law, engineering, philosophy,

education, etc. And due to this development, the nation is becoming more and more dynamic and self-reliant as the days go by. This has been made possible because of the university education.

1.2 History of University Education in Nigeria

The history of university education in Nigeria is traced to the Elliot Commission of 1943, which gave birth to the establishment of the University College Ibadan (UCI) in 1948. UCI was an affiliate of the University of London (Ike, 1976). As the university operations soared, the UCI was faced with a number of challenges which include; rigid constitutional provisions, poor staffing, and low enrolment to high dropout rate (Ibukun, 1997).

In April 1959, the Federal Government commissioned an inquiry (the Ashby Commission) to advise it on the higher education needs of the country for its first two decades. Before the submission of the report, in 1960, the Eastern Region Government established its own university which is the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The implementation of the Ashby Report led to the establishment of regional universities. These includes; University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) in 1962 by the Western Region, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1962 by the Northern Region and University of Lagos (1962) by the Federal Government. By 1962, University College, Ibadan became a full-fledged university (Babalola, Jaiyeoba & Okedirin, 2007). At this time, the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos became the first two federal universities in Nigeria. In 1970, the newly created Midwestern Region opted for a university known as University of Benin. The six universities established during this period 1960-1970 are still referred to as first generation universities. Babalola et al (2007) remarked that during this period, universities in Nigeria were under the close surveillance of the government. Appointments of principal officers, the Vice-Chancellor and members of the council, were politically motivated.

In 1975 to 1980, Nigeria commenced a third National Development Plan (NDP) which is to create four more universities. However, in 1975, instead of four, seven universities were established and government also took over the four regional universities. The seven universities were Universities of Calabar, Ilorin, Jos, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Port Harcourt and Ado Bayero University, Kano. These are referred to as second generation universities. During the period, all universities established between 1980 and early 1990 were referred to as third generation universities. They are: the Federal Universities of Technology in Owerri

(FUTO), Makurdi, Yola, Akure and Bauchi. Others include state universities in Imo, Ondo, Lagos, Akwa-Ibom, Oyo and Cross-River States (Nwagwu, 2003). The fourth-generation universities are those established between 1991 and still counting up till date. They include more state universities, National Open University and private universities.

As at the year 2025, according to the National University Commission (NUC), there are 307. Out of this number, 73 (23.5%) are federal universities, 67 (21.8%) are state universities while 168 (54.7%) are privately owned universities.

Below is the list of the public universities and their dates of establishment.

List of Federal Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Name of University	Year of Establishment
1.	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	1988
2.	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	1962
3.	Bayero University, Kano	1975
4.	Federal University Gashua, Yobe	2013
5.	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	2007
6.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	1981
7.	Federal University of Technology, Minna	1982
8.	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	1980
9.	Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State	2011
10.	Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina	2011
11.	Federal University, Kashere, Gombe State	2011
12.	Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State	2011
13.	Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State	2011
14.	Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State	2011
15.	Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa	2011
16.	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State	2011
17.	Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State	2011
18.	Federal University, Birnin Kebbi	2013
19.	Federal University, Gusau Zamfara	2013
20.	Michael Okpara University of Agricultural Umudike	1992
21.	Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola	1981
22.	National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja	2002
23.	Nigeria Police Academy Wudil	2013
24.	Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna	1985
25.	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1992
26.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	1962
27.	University of Abuja, Gwagwalada	1988
28.	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988
29.	Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi	1988
30.	University of Benin	1970
31.	University of Calabar	1975
32.	University of Ibadan	1948
33.	University of Ilorin	1975
34.	University of Jos	1975
35.	University of Lagos	1962
36.	University of Maiduguri	1975
37.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	1960
38.	University of Port-Harcourt	1975
39.	University of Uyo	1991
40.	Usumanu Danfodiyo University	1975
41.	Nigerian Maritime University Okerenkoko, Delta State	2018
42.	Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna	2018
43.	Nigerian Army University Bui	2018
44.	Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo, Benue State	2020
45.	Federal University of Agriculture, Zuru, Kebbi State	2020
46.	Federal University of Technology, Babura, Jigawa State	2021
47.	Federal University of Technology, Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State	2021
48.	Federal University of Health Sciences, Azare, Bauchi State	2021
49.	Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila Orangun, Osun State	2021
50.	David Nweze Umahi Federal University of Medical Sciences, Uburu	2022
51.	Admiralty University Ibusa, Delta State	2023

52.	Federal University of Transportation Daura, Katsina	2022
53.	African Aviation and Aerospace University	2023
54.	National University of Science and Technology, Abuja	2023
55.	Federal University of Agriculture Bassam-Biri, Bayelsa	2023
56.	Federal University of Health Sciences Kwale, Delta State	2023
57.	Federal University of Health Sciences, Katsina	2023
58.	Federal University of Agriculture, Mubi	2023
59.	Federal University of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State	2023
60.	Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State	2023
61.	Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal University of Education, Kano	2023
62.	Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo	2023
63.	Federal University of Allied Health Sciences, Enugu	2024
64.	Federal University of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Abeokuta	2023
65.	Federal University of Education Pankshin, Plateau State	2023
66.	Federal University of Education Kontagora, Niger State	2023
67.	University of Maritime Studies, Oron, Akwa Ibom State	2024
68.	Federal University of Environment and Technology, Tai Town, Ogoniland, Rivers State	2025
69.	Federal University of Applied Sciences, Kachia, Kaduna State	2025
70.	Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode	2025
71.	Federal University of Agriculture and Developmental Studies, Iragbuji, Osun State	2025
72.	Federal University of Technology and Environmental Studies, Iyin-Ekiti, Ekiti State.	2025

Source: National Universities Commission

List of State Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Name of University	Year of Establishment
1.	Rivers State University	1979
2.	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	1980
3.	Abia State University, Uturu	1981
4.	Ekiti State University	1982
5.	Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu	1982
6.	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye	1982
7.	Lagos State University, Ojo	1983
8.	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	1990
9.	Benue State University, Makurdi	1992
10.	Delta State University Abraka	1992
11.	Imo State University, Owerri	1992
12.	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	1999
13.	Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba	1999
14.	Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli	2000
15.	Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	2000
16.	Aliko Dangote university of Science & Technology, Wudil	2000
17.	Niger Delta University Yenagoa	2000
18.	Adamawa State University Mubi	2002
19.	Nasarawa State University Keffi	2002
20.	University of Cross River State, Calabar	2004
21.	Gombe State Univeristy, Gombe	2004
22.	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	2004
23.	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai	2005
24.	Plateau State University Bokkos	2005
25.	Yobe State University, Damaturu	2006
26.	Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero	2006
27.	Umar Musa Yar' Adua University Katsina	2006
28.	Osun State University Osogbo	2006
29.	Olusegun Agagu University of Sc. & Tech., Okitipupa, Ondo	2008
30.	Taraba State University, Jalingo	2008
31.	Kwara State University, Ilorin	2009
32.	Sokoto State University	2009
33.	Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden	2010
34.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni	2010
35.	Bauchi State University, Gadau	2011
36.	Yusuf Maitama Sule University Kano	2012
37.	First Technical University Ibadan	2012
38.	Sule Lamido University, Kafin Hausa, Jigawa	2013
39.	University of Medical Sciences, Ondo City, Ondo State	2015
40.	Edo State University Uzairue	2016

41.	Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe University Ogboko, Imo State	2016
42.	University of Africa Toru Orua, Bayelsa State	2016
43.	Bornu State University, Maiduguri	2016
44.	Moshood Abiola University of Science and Technology Abeokuta	2017
45.	Gombe State University of Science and Technology	2017
46.	Zamfara State University	2018
47.	Bayelsa Medical University	2019
48.	University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Umuagwo, Imo State	2019
49.	Confluence University of Science and Technology Osara, Kogi	2020
50.	Bamidele Olumilua University of Science and Technology Ikere, Ekiti State	2020
51.	University of Delta, Agbor	2021
52.	Delta University of Science and Technology, Ozoro	2021
53.	Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba	2021
54.	Lagos State University of Education, Ijanikin	2021
55.	Lagos State University of Science and Technology Ikorodu	2022
56.	Shehu Shagari University of Education, Sokoto	2022
57.	State University of Medical and Applied Sciences, Igbo-Eno, Enugu	2022
58.	University of Ilesa, Osun State	2022
59.	Emanuel Alayande University of Education Oyo	2022
60.	Kogi State University, Kabba	2023
61.	AbdulKadir Kure University, Minna Niger State	2023
62.	Kwara State University of Education, Ilorin, Kwara State	2024
63.	Abdulsalam Abubakar University of Agriculture and Climate Action, Mokwa, Niger State	2025
64.	Ebonyi State University of ICT, Science and Technology, Oferekpe, Ebonyi State	2025
65.	Cross River University of Education and Entrepreneurship, Akampa, Cross River State	2025
66.	Benue State University of Agriculture Science and Technology, Ihugh.	2025
67.	University of Aeronautics and Aerospace Engineering Ezza, Ebonyi State	2025

Source: National Universities Commission

Trends in Number of Universities 1948 – 2019 (Ten Years Interval)

	1948 -1970	1971 -1980	1981 -1990	1991 -2000	2001-2010	2011-2020	Total as at 2019
Federal	6	8	8	3	2	16	43
State	0	1	7	9	19	12	48
Private	0	0	0	3	37	39	79

Source: National Universities Commission

As at the year 2019, the number of universities was 170. This has moved to a whopping 307 as at year 2025 – meaning that a total of 137 new universities were established in 6 years (from 2020 to 2025). This phenomenon has apparently contributed to the dwindling quality of university education as currently witnessed in Nigeria. Some of these universities were established, not based on demand but based on political considerations. For example, in Edo State, there is Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma owned by Edo State Government. The university has all the indices of a poorly funding, yet the government at a time left it and established another university called Edo University, Iyamo. That was not enough, the Edo State Government - in its drive for proliferation of universities in the state - upgraded Ekiadolor College of Education to a university without putting in place necessary facilities and structures. This brought the total of state-owned universities in the state to 3. After the administration that upgraded Ekiadolor College of Education to a university left office, the new administration could not fund the take-off of the new university and the system was paralysed. It could not take off as a university and it could not remain a college of education. That is, on paper, it was a

university, but in terms of physical structures and characteristics, it was a college of education. So, it was like a bat among universities.

2. Evidence of Poor Funding of University Education in Nigeria

Infrastructural Deficit – Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, roads facilities, water, electricity and internet. Personal observations and research reports have shown that infrastructural facilities in many public universities in Nigeria are in the state of disrepair. Overcrowded classrooms and office spaces, and poorly maintained hostels are common sights in these institutions due to the problem of poor funding. Okolo and Gregory (2021) observed that the lack of adequate infrastructure in our higher education has posed serious setback in the achievement of higher education goals. In institution where there are no adequate classrooms, resource rooms, staff rooms, lack of laboratory facilities, computers and the like, proper teaching and learning cannot be effective and efficient in the system. This problem of infrastructural deficit has been part of

ASUU’s concern over the years. In a bid to confront the challenge of underfunding by increasing internally generated revenue, some universities admit more students than their carrying capacities further straining already inadequate facilities. Some introduce all sorts of levies and charges which overburden students.

Brain Drain: Poor remuneration and lack of research support drive many qualified academics to seek better opportunities abroad, depleting the system of skilled human capital. Just recently, the immediate past Vice-Chancellor of UNILAG, Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe disclosed that no fewer than 239 first-class graduates of the University of Lagos, employed as lecturers, left the institution within seven years (The Punch, 27th August, 2025). Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe made this disclosure while speaking as guest lecturer at *The PUNCH* Forum, themed: “Innovative Funding of Functional Education in the Digital Age,” held at The PUNCH Place, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. According to him, UNILAG retained 256 first-class graduates as lecturers between 2015 and 2022, but only 17 remained in the institution as of October 2023. He attributed the mass exodus to poor remuneration, unconducive working conditions, and low motivation among lecturers. Giving further details, Prof.

Ogundipe noted thus: “In 2015, 86 were employed; in 2016, 82; during my time, that is, 2017 to 2022, 88 were employed. As of October 2023, only 17 were on ground. They have gone. Very soon, in the next 10 years, you will have only females in the universities if something is not done.” He noted that unless the government adequately funds the sector, universities would, in the next decade, be dominated by women, while poorly prepared candidates would gain entry into postgraduate programmes. He lamented chronic underfunding of the education sector, noting that both federal and state allocations had consistently remained below 10 per cent, far short of UNESCO’s recommended 15 to 26 per cent.

Industrial Unrest: A recurrent issue in most industrial disputes in Nigerian universities is the issue of funding. The chronic underfunding of university education in Nigeria fuels frequent strikes by academic and non-academic staff unions, disrupting academic calendars and delaying students’ graduation. The table below shows the frequency of strike actions by one of the unions in the Nigerian university system, which is the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) (Osagiobare, Ibe, Obozokhae, & Ekwukoma, 2019).

Table 2: ASUU strike in Nigeria from the Inception of the Union in 1978

Years	Duration
1988/89/90	2 months
1992	3 months
1993	4 months
1996	6 months
1999	5 months strike
2001	3 months strike
2002	2 weeks strike
2003/2004	6 months strike
2005	3 days strike
2006	3 days strike
2007	3 months strike
2008	1 week strike
2009	4 months strike
2010	5 months, 14days
2011/2012	3 months strike
2013	5 months 9days
2017	3 weeks strike
2018/2019	2 Months 3days
2020	9 months (23 rd of March, 2020 - 23 rd of December, 2020)
2022	8 months (14 th February, 2022 to 14 th October, 2022)

Source: Osagiobare, Ibe, Obozokhae, & Ekwukoma (2019)

From the table above, it is clear that ASUU strike is a recurrent decimal in the Nigerian university education system. Most of the strikes, as earlier stated, were caused by funding issues. It is, therefore, difficult to explain why the government that cannot fund the existing universities will continue to establish more. The poor funding of the existing universities has negative impact on their quality and carrying capacities. The 2013 Needs Assessment of Nigeria’s Public Universities conducted by the Mahmood Yakubu-led committee reported that the lecturer-student ratio is 1:100. This is in contrast to the 1:42 ratio in South Africa’s public universities. According to the report, public universities are “grossly understaffed, physical facilities for teaching and learning in the public universities are inadequate,

dilapidated, over-stretched and improvised.” (Punch, 18th August, 2025). According to the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (2023), the challenges bedeviling Nigerian universities include:

- Shrinking government funding on education (in real terms)
- Infrastructural decay and deficit
- Inadequate funding of research initiatives
- Relatively poor remuneration of university workers.
- Demoralised workers (teaching and non-teaching) - with consequences on student outcomes and experiences
- Curriculum inadequacies leading to students abandoning their programme, and others look for an alternative.
- Frustration and migration of students at UG and PG Levels
- Academic Silos

At the heart of the challenges listed by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities is poor funding. Most universities in Nigeria—particularly the federal and state-owned ones—rely heavily on government subventions. However, the budgetary allocations to education generally, and universities in particular, have consistently fallen short of global standards.

3. Placing the Cart before the Horse in Expanding Carrying Capacity of Nigerian Universities

The concept of *carrying capacity* in higher education refers to the maximum number of students a university can admit, train, and graduate efficiently without overstressing its available human, physical, and financial resources. In Nigeria, carrying capacity has become a central issue in the management of universities due to the rising demand for tertiary education, limited infrastructure, and inadequate funding. The table below shows the carrying capacity of Nigerian universities from 2010 - 2020.

Table 3: Number of University, Applicants and Carrying capacity

Year	University Cumulative	Applicant	No. of admission	No. not admitted	Carrying Capacity	Capacity Applicant
2010/11	112	1,493,611	423,531	1,070,080	450,000	30.13%
2011/12	117	1,503,933	417,341	1,086,592	500,000	33.25%
2012/13	128	1,735,729	447,176	1,288,553	520,000	29.96%
2013/14	128	1,644,110	463,395	1,180,715	520,000	31.63%
2014/15	139	1,785,608	437,704	1,347,904	415,500	23.27%
2015/16	151	1,428,379	485,338	943,041	389,631	27.28%
2016/17	152	1,579,027	506,837	1,072,190	500,000	31.69%
2017/18	164	1,736,571	566,719	1,169,852	506,837	29.18%
2018/19	169	1,662,762	586,498	1,076,264	586,962	35.30%
2019/20	171	1,177,977	612,557	545,420	510,957	44.12%

Source: National Universities Commission (2020) cited in Eburu, Edet & Okpa (2020)

Table 3 above reveals that: the number of students that applied to enter Nigerian universities in 2010 was approximately 1.4 million while only 423,531 were admitted; in 2011/12 session, approximately 1.5 million applied while only 417,341 were admitted; in 2012/13 session, approximately 1.7 million applied while only 447,176 were admitted; in 2013/14 session, approximately 1.6 million applied while only 463,395 were admitted; in 2014/15 session, approximately 1.7 million applied while only 437,704 were admitted; in 2015/16 session, approximately 1.4 million applied while only 485,338 were admitted; in 2016/17 session, approximately 1.5 million applied while only 506,837 were admitted; in 2017/18 session, approximately 1.7 million applied while only 566,719 were admitted; in 2018/19 session, approximately 1.6 million applied while only 586,498 were admitted; and in 2019/20 session, approximately 1.7 million applied while only 612,557 were admitted. In the

same vein, according to a presentation by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities in 2023, the number of students that applied to enter Nigerian universities in 2023, was approximately 1.7 million and about 700,000 were admitted.

The significance of this is that while the carrying capacity of Nigerian universities is low, the government thinks that the best way to increase it is through the establishment of more universities. This is obvious from the statement accredited to the former Supervising Minister of Education, Barr. Nyesom Wike in Vanguard newspaper (July 4, 2014) which reads thus: ‘The carrying capacity of Nigerian universities that stood at 600,000 was increased to 1 million over a period of three years, through establishment of 14 new federal universities, up grading of Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil to a degree

awarding status, establishment of the National Maritime University, Okerenkoko and increase in the number of federal universities from 28 to 41' This position, unarguably, is a wrong approach to increasing carrying capacity. Instead of abolishment of more universities, the existing ones can be expanded in terms of staffing, infrastructure and other variables to admit more students. The proliferation of underperforming universities to increase carrying capacity is not helping the nation! This perhaps explains why no Nigerian public university made it into the top 1,000 in the 2025 Times Higher Education world university rankings.

4. The Seven-Year Moratorium on Establishing Tertiary Institutions – A Welcome Development

The Federal Government's decision to impose a seven-year moratorium on establishing tertiary institutions is in line with the position of this paper. It is, therefore, a welcome development. It acknowledges the harsh realities facing Nigeria's higher education sector. After years of unchecked proliferation of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, it is encouraging to see the government heed calls for a more rational and sustainable approach. This move aims to make Nigeria's tertiary education system more meaningful and globally competitive. According to the Education Minister, Tunji Alausa, the moratorium will help curb the unchecked spread of institutions, better manage overstretched resources, tackle poor and uncompetitive academic standards, and allow the government to refocus resources on improving existing institutions by upgrading facilities, recruiting qualified staff, and expanding their carrying capacity. Alausa observed, 'Several federal universities operate far below capacity, with some having fewer than 2,000 students. In one northern university, there are 1,200 staff serving fewer than 800 students. This is a waste of government resources.' Nigeria has 72 federal universities, 67 state universities, 42 polytechnics, and 28 CoE. Many of them struggle with poor enrolment. Last year, 199 universities attracted fewer than 100 applicants through JAMB, while 34 had zero applicants! Many polytechnics and CoE face similar issues; 64 colleges reported no applicants.'

5. Conclusion

This paper examined the unnecessary proliferation of universities in Nigeria which the Federal Government recently made an effort to check by imposing a seven-year moratorium on the establishment of new universities. The paper submitted that the existing

tertiary institutions in Nigeria grapple with chronic underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, meagre budgetary allocations, poor staff welfare, frequent strikes, theoretical curricula, and ill-equipped libraries and laboratories. Therefore, establishing more universities without adequate funding and proper infrastructure does not only undermine the existential essence of universities, but also turns university education in Nigeria into a mockery. The paper, therefore, sees the seven-year moratorium as a welcome development in Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

Based on the discussions in this paper, the following were recommended:

- The Federal Government should demonstrate political will in implementing the moratorium sustainably. The FG should discourage federal legislators who treat setting up tertiary institutions as constituency projects.
- The National Universities Commission and other governing bodies should act strictly within their mandates. It should scrutinise the establishment of public tertiary institutions with the same rigour applied to private ones. Automatic approvals for public universities undermine their responsibilities to the country.
- Tertiary institutions need adequate funding. Therefore, budgetary support across tertiary sub-sectors must be significantly increased. Additionally, the Federal Government should fulfil the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding signed with ASUU, which pledged N1.2 trillion to fund universities, an essential step towards advancing education.
- The dilapidated facilities in tertiary institutions should be urgent revived. Universities must have well-equipped libraries, and staff welfare needs prioritisation to achieve optimal results.
- A comprehensive audit of tertiary institutions is necessary to identify those that could be merged.
- The low student numbers in northern universities, as observed by the Honourable Minister of Education, partly reflect the broader issue of youth not attending school. The government must implement policies to bring these young people into classrooms.

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