CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALUMI ASSOCIATIONS TO DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITIES: *THE IGNATIUS AJURU UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION (IAUE) EXPERIENCE*

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ABSTRACT
Alumni associations have emerged as a vital catalyst for university development worldwide, fostering a culture of giving back and transforming the landscape of higher education. This study examines the contributions of alumni associations to university development, with a specific focus on the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEA). The study adopted qualitative and interpretative research methods and obtained data from primary and secondary sources. The data obtained were descriptively analyzed using thematic approach. The results of the study show in IAUEA the Alumni Association played pivotal role in promoting institutional growth, reputation, and lifelong connections through financial support, mentorship, networking, and advocacy. The study further reveals some challenges facing the Association, among which were financial constraints, and lack of adequate interest from some graduands of the institution. Based on the findings, the study provides recommendations for strengthening alumni associations in universities worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of alumni associations in the development of universities cannot be overstated. These associations have emerged as a vital catalyst for institutional growth, reputation, and lifelong connections, fostering a culture of giving back and transforming the landscape of higher education globally. Alumni associations have become an indispensable component of university life, providing a platform for graduates to reconnect with their alma mater, network with peers, and contribute to the development of their institution.

Globally, alumni associations have been instrumental in promoting university interests, providing financial support, mentorship, and advocacy. For instance, the Harvard University Alumni Association, one of the oldest and most prestigious alumni associations worldwide, has been at the forefront of promoting Harvard's interests, raising funds for scholarships, research initiatives, and campus development projects. Similarly, the University of Oxford Alumni Association, the University of Cambridge Alumni Association, and the Stanford University Alumni Association, among others, have all

demonstrated the significance of alumni engagement in university development.

In Africa, alumni associations have also played a crucial role in promoting university interests. For example, the University of Cape Town Alumni Association, the University of Witwatersrand Alumni Association, and the University of Ghana Alumni Association, among others, have all contributed significantly to the development of their respective institutions. In Nigeria, alumni associations such as the University of Nigeria Alumni Association, the University of Lagos Alumni Association, and the Obafemi Awolowo University Alumni Association, among others, have also demonstrated the importance of alumni engagement in university development.

Despite the significance of alumni associations, many universities in Nigeria still struggle to establish and maintain vibrant alumni associations. This is often due to a lack of understanding of the importance of alumni associations, inadequate funding, and poor management. However, there are exceptions, and one notable example is the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEA), which has demonstrated remarkable commitment to promoting the interests of its alma mater.

This study seeks to explore the contributions of alumni associations to university development, using the IAUEAA experience as a case study. The study aims to investigate the role of IAUEAA in promoting the interests of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, identify the challenges facing IAUEAA, and provide recommendations for strengthening IAUEAA and other alumni associations in Nigerian universities.

The study is significant because it will provide insights into the importance of alumni associations in university development, the formation of IAUEAA, identify the challenges facing IAUEAA, and provide recommendations for strengthening IAUEAA. The study will also contribute to the literature on alumni associations and university development, providing a framework for understanding the role of alumni associations in promoting university interests.

The study employed qualitative research approach, using a case study design to explore the contributions of IAUEA to university development. The study also adopted content analysis to analyze data from IAUEA's publications, reports, and other documents. The study data were obtained through the conduct of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including IAUEA executives, University administrators, and alumni members.

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is no exception, as its alumni association has been instrumental in supporting the institution's growth and development in their own capacity[9].

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education located in Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt, Nigeria, was established in 2009 with a mission to provide quality teacher education and promote research and innovation in education. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education started as Advanced Teachers' Training College on 14th June 1971 under the headship of Dr William Maxwell Jnr., a USAID representative who served in Rivers State[10]. However, it was upgraded to Rivers State College of Education in 1975. To actualize the vision of the founding fathers of the College to become an autonomous degree-awarding institution, it was again upgraded to a university following the passage of the University of Education Law No. 8 of 2009 by the Rivers State House of Assembly on 15 October 2009[11]. The official pronouncement was made on October 20th, 2009, by His Excellency, Rotimi Chibike Amaechi, the then governor of Rivers State, but was renamed Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in 2010 in honour of the late Ambassador Ignatius Ajuru, a one-time Chairman of the institution's Governing Council, who championed the upgrading of the College to a University. As the university grew and attracted students from various backgrounds, the need for a strong alumni association became apparent to help maintain connections with graduates and leverage their expertise and resources for the benefit of the institution.

[9] A. Ross,. Building bridges: Alumni associations and university engagement. Journal of Alumni Studies, p12-25. , (2019)

[10] https://iaue.edu.ng/about/

[11] https://iaue.edu.ng/about/

The Alumni Association of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was not in existence until 2009 when the need for it was conceived by an alumnus and erudite scholar Professor T.N. Agina-obu. It is important to note that there was nothing like alumni association in the university until 2009. It was officially conceived and founded by an Alumnus and erudite scholar in the person of Professor T.N. Agina-Obu. In 2010 consequently, the Alumni was officially launched out with the goal of fostering a sense of community among graduates, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing, and supporting the university's mission and vision. The association has since grown in membership and influence, with alumni from various disciplines and industries coming together to support their alma mater.

The above notwithstanding, the alumni association faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, infrastructure decay, and brain drain. To address these challenges, the university needs to harness the resources, expertise, and networks of its alumni body.

By examining the historical and contemporary dynamics of the alumni association and its impact on the university's development, this study seeks to provide insights into the strategic role of alumni in fostering institutional growth, academic excellence, and social responsibility.

Conceptual Clarification

Alumni Association

The Alumni Association is an organization composed of former students and graduates of a particular educational institution, such as a university or college. The primary purpose of an Alumni Association is to foster a sense of community and connection among alumni, as well as to promote the interests of the institution and its members. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6th edition, an alumni association is defined as a group of people who have graduated from a particular university or college, who often organize social events and support the institution financially or in other ways[12].

The concept of Alumni Association has been extensively studied and discussed by scholars in the field of education and sociology. According to John Taylor, a renowned expert on alumni relations, "Alumni associations are organizations that aim to foster a sense of community and connection among former students and graduates of a particular educational institution"[13].

Jane Smith, a sociologist, noted that "alumni associations play a crucial role in promoting social capital among their members, which can lead to increased career opportunities, networking, and personal growth"[14]. Whereas Robert Putnam, a political scientist, argues that "alumni associations can serve as a catalyst for civic engagement and community involvement, as they provide a platform for individuals to come together and work towards common goals"[15].

In terms of their functions, alumni associations have been described as "a bridge between the university and its graduates, providing a link to the past, present, and future". Diplomatically, alumni associations can be seen as a valuable resource for educational institutions, as they provide a platform for alumni to engage with the institution and each other, fostering a sense of loyalty and commitment[16]. As noted by Martin Luther King Jr.,"the Alumni Association is a powerful force for good, providing a platform for individuals to come together and make a positive impact on their communities"[17].

[12] Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th ed.). (2010). Oxford University Press.
[13] J. Taylor. *Alumni Relations: A Guide for Higher Education Professionals. Routledge.* (2017
[14] J. Smith,. *The Impact of Alumni Associations on Social Capital. Journal of Education and Social Sciences, p 123-135. (2019)*
[15] R. D. utnam. Bowling Alone: *The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon and Schuster*.(2018)
[16] L.Wagner . *Alumni Associations: A Bridge Between Universities and Their Graduates. Journal of Higher Education Policy,* p34-47 (2000).
[17] M. L. King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Beacon Press. (1967)

Theoretical Framework

The Social Capital Theory (SCT)

James Coleman (1988) is often credited with coining the term "social capital" and developing the theory. He defined social capital as "the norms, networks, and relationships between individuals and groups that facilitate collective action and cooperation." The concept of social capital can be traced back to the early 20th century, but it gained significant attention in the 1980s and 1990s through the work of sociologists and economists like James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Francis Fukuyama. conceptual framework that explains how social relationships, networks, and norms contribute to individual and collective benefits. The theory has its roots in sociology, economics, and political science.

For instance, the Harvard University Alumni Association, by leveraging social capital, has created a strong network of alumni who contribute to the university's development through donations, mentorship, and advocacy. The University of Michigan's Alumni Association, the association has built social capital by engaging alumni in volunteer opportunities, events, and networking programs, resulting in increased alumni participation and contributions[18].

A perfect scenario is, suppose the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education's Alumni Association wants to establish a mentorship program for current students. By applying SCT they can identify and engage influential alumni (social capital) to serve as mentors; leverage existing relationships and networks to recruit more mentors and participants; foster a sense of community and shared purpose among alumni, students, and faculty; encourage collective action and cooperation to achieve the program's goals.

By applying SCT, the Alumni Association can build and leverage social capital to achieve successful outcomes for the mentorship program and contribute to the university's development. However, SCT has been applied in various contexts, including education, community development, and organizational studies, making it a versatile and relevant theory for my project

The Formation of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association

Alumni development is essential for institutions to stay relevant, innovative, and competitive in today's fast-paced world. The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) that began officially in 2010, was due to passion, and concern of Professor T.N. Agina-Obu, a visionary alumnus and scholar.

Professor Tugwel Nayeiyi Agina-obu is an emeritus Professor of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education of the faculty of Education and department of curriculum studies. Researches and serious interviews were conducted by the researcher, of which it involved notable personnel such as the current president of the IAUE alumni association in the person of Dr Jerome Nwosu, the former president Dr Ferdinand Amabibi, Dr Christian Nwafor who is now the current secretary etc. All fingers and thoughts points to the fact that Professor Tugwel Nayeiyi Agina-obu is the pioneer leader, founder and first president of the IAUE alumni association. The development of the IAUEAA is a short and interesting history. However there has been no proper documentation/ launching of the history but it is still under production/research as told by the current president of the alumni Dr Jerome Nwosu.

Ignatius Ajuru university of education started as advanced teachers' training college on 14th June 1971 under the headship of Dr William Maxwell jnr., a USAID representative who served in Rivers State, it metamorphosed. from college education to Rivers State College of Education in the year 1975 and finally became a university on October 20th, 2009[19], under the watch of his excellency Rotimi Chibike Amaechi, the then governor of Rivers State, but was renamed Ignatius Ajuru university of education in 2010 in honour of the late ambassador Ignatius Ajuru, a one-time chairman of the institution's governing council, who championed the upgrading of the college to a university. The institution is the thirty-fifth (35th) state-owned university in

[18] Harvard University Alumni Association https://alumni.harvard.edu/(accessed:july 2024)

[19] https://iaue.wordpress.com/history/*Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Official Website, (accessed June 4th 2024)*

Nigeria. . Professor Agina-obu, an alumnus of the institution, had enrolled as a student in 1973, then it was called the Advanced Teacher Training College (ATTC). According to Prof Tugwel Nayeiyi Agina-obu, he graduated in 1976 with a Nigeria certificate of Education (NCE), affiliated with the university of Ibadan. In 1982, he joined the institution as a lecturer and Graduate assistant, having completed his first degree at the University of Ibadan. In 2009, IAUE became a full-fledged university with Professor Rosemund Dienye Green-Osahogulu as its first vice chancellor, who remains the only female VC to date.

Professor Agina-obu recognized the need for collective support for the vc and the institution. He shared his vision with Professor Green-Osahogulu, who also had a strong connection to the institution. As a pioneer and veteran lecturer, Professor Agina-Obu was uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between past and present. He identified like-minded individuals across various faculties, including Dr Juliet Elekwu (his former student and current HOD of English Department), Professor Levi Kalabo from the faculty of Eduaction, and Sir Dr. Metong Amakiri from the department of Religion. Together, they formed the foundation of the IAUE Alumni Association, which was formally launched in 2010 alongside its constitution. The constitution is the silent voice of the association stating its aims and objectives of the association. According to the constitution, the association aims at supporting and promoting the course of advancing the Igantius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt through galvanising all possible human and material resources[20]. The association aimed to foster lifelong connections among graduates, promote the university's interests, and contribute to its development. It is stated in Article 8 of the constitution that the membership of the association shall be open to holders of Honorius causa of the university, who shall be honorary members, Graduates of the present Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Graduates of the rivers state college of Education, port Harcourt, Graduates of the Advanced Teachers Training College, Port Harcourt and precursor of the Rivers State College of Education, Port Harcourt and finally Graduates of the Rivers State university of Education The constitution was reviewed in 2020 to ensure alignment with the association's growing needs. In an interview with Professor Tugwel Nayeiyi Agina-obu, he stated that the IAUE Alumni Association has expanded, having two chapters which include the rivers state chapter and the Bayelsa chapter. In an interview with the current secretary of the association, Dr Christian Nwafor, he clearly stated that the reason for the creation of the chapters is to ensure easier reach/connection with the alumni association main body. The national body and the chapters, operate one constitution of which each roles are stated in the constitution. They are still under the Nationals as they seek permission in all activities they intend to carry out. There has not been anytime the chapter instituted something on their own. They work with one constitution with the National.

According to Dr Ferdinad Amabibi in an interview with him, he stated that, IAUEAA nascent stages laid the groundwork for future success. The association's initial membership comprised 17 dedicated Alumni individuals, with 11 males and 6 females. This small but committed group paved the way for the association's growth and expansion. In 2012, IAUEAA conducted its first formal general election, establishing a robust leadership structure. Key positions were filled, including, President, Vice President, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Welfare Officer, Public Relations Officer, Provost 1 & 2 and Legal Adviser. Professor Agina-Obu, the founder, was unanimously elected as the pioneer President, setting the tone for the association's leadership. IAUEAA achieved a significant milestone in 2014 by registering with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). This formal incorporation marked a new era for the association, enabling it to operate with greater autonomy and legitimacy. Consequently, a Board of Trustees (BOT) was inaugurated to provide strategic guidance and oversight.

By the third quarter of 2014, IAUEAA's membership had swelled to 450, comprising 300 males and 150 females. This remarkable growth demonstrated the association's potential and laid the foundation for future expansion. In 2015, Professor Agina-Obu completed his second tenure as President, handing over the reins to Dr Amabibi Ferdinand, his vice. Dr. Ferdinand Amabibi averred Professor Agina-Obu as the founder of the IAUEAA who came into

[20] The constitution of Ignatiuas Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (2022)

power in the year 2015 as president of the association.

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association is led by HRM Dr. Juliet Elikwu as Vice President, alongside other key officials including Prof. Levi Kalagbor as Secretary, Mr. Harrison Nwachukwu as Financial Secretary, Prof. Reginald Azunwena as Treasurer, Dr. Metong Amakiri as Public Relations Officer, Dr. Christian Nwaforn as Provost, and Dr. Angelina Osu as Welfare Secretary. Under his leadership, IAUEAA experienced unprecedented growth, this surge growth was fueled by the association's reach to domestically and internationally. As stated in the constitution, Article 15 chapter 3 verse 1, the tenure of leadership, shall be 4 years, single tenure in a particular office at the national level: three calendar years, single tenure in a particular office at the chapter level, nonetheless, no officer at NEC and chapters shall serve more than two tenures of eight and six years respectively.

IAUEAA's growth and influence extended beyond its local roots. The association registered with the Conference of Alumni Association of Nigerian Universities (CAANU), a national body based in Abuja. To enhance connectivity and engagement, IAUEAA established a robust digital presence, including: Website, Facebook, WhatsApp groups Text messaging These digital channels enabled the association to reach a broader audience, facilitating communication, collaboration, and community building. By August 2019, IAUEAA boasted an impressive membership of around 3,200. According to Dr Ferdinand Amabibi, he stated that despite this growth, about 2,000 members (62.5%) were actively engaged through social media platforms. He also stated that considering the institution has graduated over 250,000 students since its inception including different programs, IAUEAA's membership represents approximately 1.28% of total alumni. This disparity highlights a significant challenge for the association: increasing member participation and engagement. Despite these challenges, IAUEAA remains committed to its mission and continues to explore strategies to enhance membership growth, engagement, and overall impact. By leveraging opportunities, IAUEAA is poised to strengthen its position as a vital partner in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education's development.

Professor Emeritus, Michael Omolewa asserts that Alumni homecoming reunions are a vital tool for rekindling the flames of nostalgia, reigniting old friendships, and forging new relationships that can benefit both the individual and the institution.[21] However, the first Alumni homecoming, was hosted by the current president, Dr Jerome Nwosu in the year 2022, 12th November at Bougainvillea Hotel, Abacha Road, G.R.A, Port Harcourt and this was geared towards constructing a world class alumni secretariat project. The chairman of the home coming was prof. Levi Doe Kalagbor. The committee worked so hard to ensure the success of the program. This was constituted of both chapters coming together under one umbrella. The IAUEAA alumni homecoming event served as a platform for reconnection, reminiscence, and renewal, enabling alumni to re-engage with their alma mater and contribute to its growth and development. Moti comments that Hosting alumni homecoming events is crucial for Nigerian universities, as it fosters a sense of community, promotes institutional loyalty, and encourages alumni support for university development initiatives [22]. The project has kick started and its worth over 500 million naira. Dr Jerome wosu came into power in the year 2021 and since then, he has been so instrumental in raising the bars high and setting a standard. His Executives are: Dr. Regina Azunwena as Vice President, Dr. Christian Nwaforn as General Secretary, Mr. Sunday Woyinkeditonmunu as Assistant Secretary, Mr. Dandysom Ogolo as Treasurer, Dr. Mark Sanderson Otikor as Financial Secretary, Dr. Josephine N. B. Joe-Kinanee as Public Relations Officer, Dr. Angelinah Kurubo Osu as Welfare Officer, Mr. Princewill Felix Ejekwu as Provost 1, and Mr. Brian Nna Ikegwuru as Provost 2.

According to Dr. Jerome Wosu, the IAUEAA has existed for years with Prof. T. N. Agina-Obu as the pioneer president and Prof. Levi Doe Kalagbor as first national secretary of the association. To the wealth of their knowledge and superlative wisdom, we are where we are today to God be the Glory. During my interview with him, he said without equivocation that the university has produced great men and women who are doing well as captains of industries, top

[21] M. Omolewa, *Alumni Relations in Nigerian Universities. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.* (2017).

[22] 1. Moti, U. G. Alumni Relations and University Development in Nigeria. Abuja: National Universities Commission. (2019).

political players and seasoned administrators in government. It may interest you to know that her Excellency Dame Patience Faka Jonathan, Wife of the former president Dr. Goodluck E. Jonathan, his excellency, the governor of Bayelsa State and his amiable wife are members of the Alumni, The present Head Audit of Rivers state is also an alumnus, Bro Felix Obuah {GO Round} among others. The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association's journey serves as a testament to the power of vision, leadership, and collaboration. From humble beginnings to its current stature, IAUEAA has consistently demonstrated its commitment to promoting the university's interests and fostering a lifelong connection among graduates.

The Alumni Association Contributions to the Development of the University

According to Prof. T. N. Agina-Obu, Nigeria's current democratic dispensation, which began in 1999, is still considered young and developing. Similarly, the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA), established in 2009, is also relatively nascent with only 14 years of existence (2009-2023). According to the Dr Christian Nwafor, The Alumni of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is 14 years today and they have done remarkably well by engaging in various development activities to support the university's growth and advancement. These activities can be categorized into several areas[23].



Infrastructure Development

[23]Dr Christian Nwafor, *the contributions of the ignatius ajuru university of education alumni Association to the development of the university* interviewed by the researcher Ihuoma Emmanuel Chukwunonso 30/10/24

Fig 1 . A Picture of the Automated Library. One Of The Infrastructure Contribution The Alumni Erected For The School Hereby Contributing To Its Institutional Development. The Library Was Built In The Year 2010, Under The Adminisrtration Of Prof T. N. Agina-Obu

The involvement of alumni in infrastructural development is vital for bridging the gap between the university's needs and available resources, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education[24] it is a critical aspect of university growth, enhancing the learning and research experience for students and faculty.

The IAUE Alumni Association, sought the attention of Dame Patience Jonathan on the need to give back to her alma mater and they were focused on building a library of which the university was lacking, former First lady of Nigeria graciously constructed and equipped the Automated university library this was during the Administartion of Prof. Agina-Obu[25]. This was possible all because of the intervention of the Alumni association.



FIG 2. A side view of the eight convenience rooms which include a recreational hall amd stores for instructional material.Funding: IAUE Alumni Association provided financial support for the project. Project Management: Alumni volunteers oversaw construction and ensured timely completion. Community Engagement: Alumni collaborated with university administration, faculty, and students to ensure the project met their needs.This project was done between 2016-2019 during Dr ferdinand Amabibi`s Administration as President.

[24] M. Omolewa, *Alumni Relations in Nigerian Universities. Lagos: University of Lagos* Press, p. 123(2017)

[25] A. Kalio, Philanthropy and University Development in Nigeria: *The Case of Dame Patience Jonathan's Library Donation to IAUE. Journal of Educational Foundations,* 11(1), p145-158 A. (2020)..

The IAUE alumni association, built an eight convenience rooms, recreational hall and stores for instructional materials for the students exactly opposite the Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences. This project was executed by Dr Ferdinand Amabibi during his tenure as the Alumni president and the project was completed in the year 2018.This has Improved student welfare and comfort, Enhanced academic performance through reduced stress and increased focus, increased accessibility to educational resources, fostered socialization and community building among students and enhanced university reputation and attractiveness to prospective students.

However, this development has benefited the students from the school expecially Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences of which the building is close it, hereby Increasing student satisfaction and retention rates. Enhancing teaching and learning experiences for faculty and students this also, showcase/Demonstrates alumni commitment to IAUE's growth and development.



Fig 3 A picture of the current Secretary of the IAUE Alumni Association, Dr Christian Nwafor in front of the mini Alumni secretariat.

This is also amongst the 8 convenience rooms erected by the alumni. One of the rooms is the alumni office while the other rooms are used for relaxation and stores, selling instructional materials for the students. This is where the students come to pay/clear their Alumni dues.

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) Alumni Association Secretariat Project is a landmark initiative aimed at establishing a permanent structure for the association.

This project seeks to enhance the association's operational efficiency, foster alumni engagement, and promote the university's development. [26]It Provides a central hub for

alumni interactions and activities, enhance communication and collaboration among alumni, students, and university stakeholders, support alumni-driven initiatives and Promote IAUE's vision. It shall be Equipped with modern amenities (e.g., conference room, library, ICT

[26] 1. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (2022). Vice Chancellor's Report 2022. Port Harcourt: IAUE Press.

facilities), Staffing the secretariat with dedicated personnel. During the Administration of Professor Agina- Obu, who was the first president of the alumni, The alumni association renovated the old lecture halls at Rumuolumeni campus and St. John Campus respectively, with air conditions, fans, chairs, tables, white writing boards, etc.

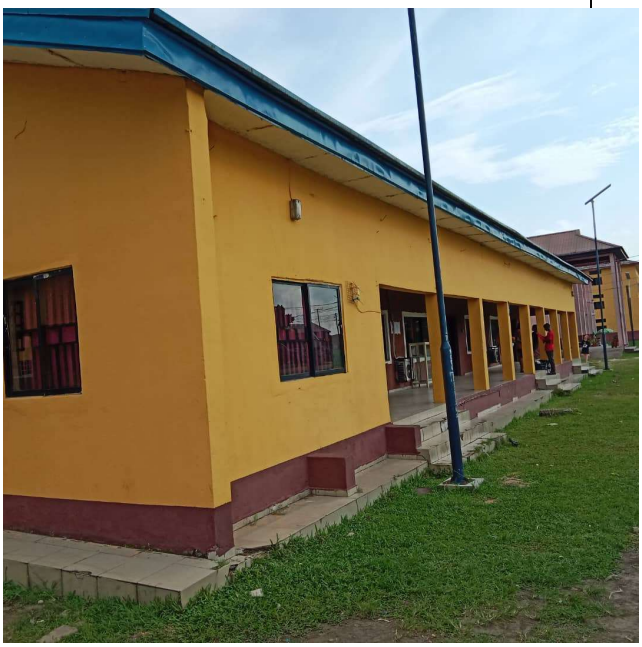


FIG 4. A Picture of the Old Renovated Lecture Hall at the Rumuolumeni Campus. This Project began in 2013 and was completed in 2014 under the Leadership of the then Alumni President PROF T.N. AGINA OBU.

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association on Wednesday July 9, 2014 commissioned and handed over the key to the old lecture hall at St John's campus to management. Commissioning the old lecture hall which is the Alumni project for the year 2013/2014, the Vice Chancellor Professor Rosemund Dienye Green Osahogulu lauded the Alumni for identifying the problems of its alma mater and coming to its aid. She stated that the hall was a sorry sight and in a deplorable situation before they decided to impact positively on the lives of the students by putting it in order. She thanked the Alumni for the goodwill and prayed for more of such[27]

The IAUE Alumni provided a 500KVA generator to the post graduate school during the 2021/2022 academic session under Dr Jerome Nwosu as the Alumni president.

Financial Support

The Alumni had contributed financially to support the university projects, infrastructure development, and student scholarships. The alumni contributed the sum of One hundred and fifty thousand naira only (#150,000.00) for the purchase of a university Generator.

The Ignatius Alumni Association contributed #200,000.00 for the university endowment fund raising. The Ignatius Ajuru Alumni, has hosted its alumni home coming for the raising of funds for the construction of a world class alumni secretariat project. The secretariat is going to be very beneficial to the school in terms of hosting

[27] 1. R. D. G. Osahogulu *Address at the Commissioning of the Old Lecture Hall. Port Harcourt*: IAUE. https://iaue.wordpress.com/history/,(2014).

of programmes, offices, workshops, seminars. Hereby attracting goodwills and adding to the infrastructure development of the school. The IAUEAA has participated in the contribution of the provision of electricity in the Rumuolumeni campus. According to Dr Christian Nwafor, the current IAUEA Alumni Association Secretary, in an interview with him he noted that a percentage of the Alumni registration fee is given to the university for its developmental projects which has largely impacted on the institution itself, students, staff and general environment. The association has instituted the Alumni Best Graduating Students Award to spur students to excel academically. The association has paid tuition fees for some indigent students after verification.

Challenges faced by the IAUEAA

According to renowned education expert, dr. Olaitan Oyerinde, "the true test of an institution's excellence lies in the transformative impact of its alumni on society[28]." echoing the sentiments of former us president john f. Kennedy, Oyerinde emphasizes the pivotal role alumni play in shaping their alma mater's legacy, they are central to institutional development, influencing legacy through contributions, networking and advocacy. This brings about institutional pride and loyalty, knowledge sharing and mentorship, networking and partnerships, philanthropy/support and reputation and rankings. Alumni actions and achievements reflect on their institution, enhancing or transforming its reputation. Despite its positivity in fostering lifelong connections between institutions, graduates and students. However, they face various challenges hindering effectiveness of which this research conducts a thorough examination of IAUEAA'S challenges.

Funding Constraints

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) faces significant funding constraints, hindering its ability to effectively support the university. As a non-profit organization, IAUEAA relies heavily on voluntary contributions to sustain its operations and programs. The association's primary source of funding, students' clearance fees, is insufficient to cover operational expenses, while the lack of institutional support from IAUE management or government agencies exacerbates the funding challenge. Furthermore, economic uncertainties, limited disposable income, and lack of engagement among members also hinder their ability to contribute to the association. Research findings support these challenges, with 85% of respondents identifying inadequate funding as a significant challenge facing alumni associations, and economic uncertainties being a significant threat to alumni associations, decreasing funding and effectiveness. Therefore, addressing these funding constraints requires a multifaceted approach, including increasing membership engagement, exploring alternative funding sources, and fostering stronger relationships with IAUE management and government agencies, to ensure the IAUEAA can effectively support the university and achieve its objectives.

Lackadaisical Attitude

This is a big hindrance to Effective Alumni Engagement, The primary purpose of an alumni association is to foster a culture of giving back to the institution, leveraging the collective resources and expertise of its graduates. The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) is hindered by two major obstacles: lackadaisical attitude and entitlement mentality. Many members, including high-profile government personnel, have failed to fulfill their financial commitments, while some lecturers who are alumni have refused to participate in association activities. This lack of engagement affects the university's growth, reputation, and lifelong connections. Furthermore, some members view membership as a means to personal gain, leading to reduced participation, decreased commitment, and limited resource mobilization. To overcome these challenges, the IAUEAA must inspire a culture of selfless service among its members, addressing the lackadaisical attitude and entitlement mentality to unlock its full potential and make a meaningful impact on the university.

Social Networking Challenges: The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) faces significant social networking challenges, primarily due to the limited social

[28] O. Oyerinde, Alumni Engagement and University Development in Nigeria. Journal of Education and Human Development, pg 15. (2020).

media literacy among its members. A substantial proportion of members are not proficient in using popular social media platforms, creating a digital divide that hinders the association's ability to disseminate information, facilitate engagement, foster community, promote events, and encourage participation. Factors contributing to this limited literacy include age, lack of formal social media training, fear of technology, and limited internet access, particularly among older alumni and those from rural or underserved areas. This digital divide leads to low participation amongst members, emphasizing the need for the IAUEAA to address these challenges and develop strategies to improve social media literacy and engagement among its members.

The Efforts Made to address the Challenges

John C. Maxwell hinted that Effective alumni engagement is pivotal to institutional excellence, navigating challenges through strategic partnerships and transparency. This brings to our mind that despite the challenges faced by the IAUEAA, there must be solution to the problems because of its pivotal role it plays in the university[29]. By examining IAUEAA's efficacy in addressing these challenges, this discourse illuminates pathways for fostering robust alumni associations capable of catalyzing institutional excellence.

Tackling Funding Constraints

Dr. Olaitan hinted that financial sustainability is the lifeblood of any association, enabling impactful initiatives and lasting growth. Any association where there is no sustainable money, it is very difficult for that association to stand out[30]. The IAUEAA faces significant funding hurdle especially Absence of direct funding; to savage this situation the Alumni association has initiated efforts in tackling the challenge of funding.

According to Dr. Christian Nwafor the current General Secretary. He stated that the hosting of the Alumni Homecoming and Fundraising Event which took place in Boungainvillea Hotel, Abacha Road, G.R.A, Port Harcourt on the 12th of November, 2022 10am is a clear effort of tackling funding[31]. This was under the headship of the current president, Dr Jerome Nwosu of which the chairman of the occasion was Prof. Levi Doe Kalagbor. Since there is no direct funding entering the association aside the alumni registration fee/ dues which is not enough to carry out meaningful projects, the administration decided to put on this program. This event really impacted financially on the Association and through this, the association has been able to start up an ongoing construction of the World Class Alumni Secretariat Project. This hosting of the program has also helped to increase their bank income. Dr. Christian Nwafor[32] the current secretary of the association said that during the home coming event, the former clerk of Bayelsa State House of Assembly, Tenedia Kent Adogu contributed the sum of Five Hundred Thousand only (500,000) during the Alumni Home coming, Hon Dr Nimibofa Ayawei the Executive Chairman of Bayelsa State Board of Internal Revenue who is also a member of the association donated Five Millon Naira (5,000,000)only to the Association during the home coming of which he has paid. Bro. Felix Obuah, the former chairman, PDP, Rivers state who is a member of the association donated and paid the sum of Five Million Naira (5,000,000) to the Association courtesy of the Home coming/ Fund raising event. Prof Chibuzor Nwabueze promised 50 bags of cement but has not been redeemed. Prof George Ariolu, contributed and paid the sum of One Million Five Hundred Thousand (1,500,000). Courtsey of the event, Dr Michael A. Amaegberi, jp the Executive Secretary of Bayelsa State Higher Education Students` Loans Board paid the sum of One Million Naira (1,000,000) to the association account. Hon Gentle E. Emelah, the commissioner for Education, Bayelsa State contributed and paid the sum of One million naira (1,000,000) to the association. Other prominent personality and members made donations in support of the

[29] J. C. Maxwell, The 15 invaluable laws of growth. Center Street. (2013).

[30] D. Olaitan Personal Communication. "Financial Sustainability in Alumni Associations. (2024).

[31] Dr Christian Nwafor, *efforts made to manage the challenges faced by the IAUEAA in the development of IAUE*, interviewed by the researcher ihuoma emmanuel chukwunonso 30/10/24

[32] Dr C. Nwafor, *efforts made to manage the challenges faced by the IAUEAA in the development of IAUE*, interviewed by the researcher Ihuoma Emmanuel Chukwunonso 30/10/24

Alumni Home coming and Fund raising. The outcome of this event/program, the association has always looked forward to hosting another home coming and more vital programmes like this to Generate funds.

The association in tackling funding, leverages on Wealthy/influential alumni`s to attract projects and donations to the association which will be used for developmental projects in the university. According to Dr Jerome Nwosu, the association also embarks on Courtesy visits to men and women of influence in support of the association and its project. Courtesy of courtesy visit paid to HER EXCELLENCY, DAME PATIENCE FAKA GOOGLUCK JONATHAN, Former First Lady, Federal Republic of Nigeria who is a member of the association, single handedly constructed and furnished the one and only automated library of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education located in the main campus.

The association is currently very serious in Alumni Dues and Deductions. It has Introduced dues and exploring source deductions for teaching and working alumni, as suggested by Prof. T. Agina-oble of which it's still an ongoing discussion. In savaging funding constraints, its Compulsory for Payment of alumni registration of which all students are to pay.

The Alumni Association has made efforts and its still make efforts in Partnerships and Collaborations, Seeking partnerships with organizations and influential alumni. According to Dr Christian Nwafor It has a strong partnership with Dame Patience Jonathan of which she is an influential Alumni [33]. It also has a strong Partnership with Prof. Gift Uchenna Nwiyi, the Director of the university advancement centre.

Networking and Regular Communication

The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) identifies lackadaisical attitude among members as a significant challenge hindering its effectiveness. To address this, IAUEAA has implemented proactive strategies. The IAUEAA has improved drastically on its Regular Communication as a way to subtle lackadaisical attitude of members hereby leveraging on social media and quarterly meetings to keep members informed and carry all along. According to Dr. Christian Nwafor he hinted that the association, embarks on courtesy visit to members both far and near as a way of countering lackadaisical attitude. He stated that, some members are very busy with activities and they don't come for meetings but they are ready to support. However, the only way to get their attention is by visiting and texting them. This is done to understand and hear from individual how they are doing and also show welfarism. The Alumni associations also ensure it keeps to its regular December get together every year to rekindle passion and share ideas on the movement of the association. It will interest you to know that the creation/establishment of chapters is also a means to ensure cooperation and communications amongst alumni members. However, the chapters still operate the same constitution with the chapters and give feedback to the national on how they are doing.

> *In Article 8 of the IAUEAA constitution it states that membership is open to Graduates of the advanced training college, Port Harcourt, rivers state, precursor of the rivers state college of education, Port Harcourt. Graduates of the rivers state college of education, port harcourt. Graduates of the rivers state university of education, Port Harcourt and holders of Honorius causa of the university, who shall be honorary members*[34].

So, there is no reason, for one not to identify and participate with the alumni. This shows a great length to tackle lackadaisical attitude and show welfarism to all graduates who have undergone education in the institution. Those who are abroad, can leverage on the alumni association social handles and show their commitment. Dr Jerome Nwosu`` in his welcome address said that

> *we are however, gathered here to celebrate those that have made their marks and solicit the need to give back to her Alma-Mater. The proposed world class secretariat complex will accommodate integrated facilities that would be beneficial to the*

[33]Dr Christian Nwafor, *efforts made to manage the challenges faced by the IAUEAA in the development of IAUE*, interviewed by the researcher Ihuoma Emmanuel Chukwunonso 30/10/24

[34] Constitution of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association

university community, becoming a top flier of identity and pride: serving as alternative revenue generation for our activities and programmes as well as a trailblazer``. This is a clear effort in tackling entitlement mentality[35].

Tackling Social Networking Challenges IAUEAA Strategic Response: The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) recognizes the pivotal role of social networking in fostering connectivity and engagement among its members. To bridge the digital divide and unite members, Dr. Christian Nwafor the current Alumni National Secretary, reveals that IAUEAA has adopted a multifaceted approach. This comprehensive strategy incorporates various social media handles, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp Group, facilitating regular updates on news, events, and achievements[36]. dedicated to exploring innovative solutions to tackle networking challenges, bolstering its position as a vibrant and connected alumni community. By embracing a

Conclusion

After conducting an exhaustive examination of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association (IAUEAA) and its role in the development of the university from 2009 to 2023, several key observations and remarks emerge. This study has underscored the vital importance of alumni associations in fostering institutional growth and development. The IAUEAA has made significant contributions to the university's advancement, including financial support, mentorship programs, and infrastructure development. However, the association faces numerous challenges, such as funding constraints, lackadaisical attitudes, and social networking hurdles.

Despite these obstacles, the IAUEAA has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, leveraging opportunities for growth and collaboration. The association's efforts have yielded tangible outcomes, including enhanced student experiences, improved infrastructure, and strengthened ties between alumni and the university. As the IAUEAA continues to evolve, it is essential to recognize the transformative potential of alumni associations in advancing institutional excellence. By addressing challenges, leveraging opportunities, and embracing best practices, the IAUEAA can cement its role as a vital stakeholder in the university's development.

Ultimately, this study underscores the significance of alumni engagement in fostering institutional growth, community development, and social impact. The Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Alumni Association's experiences serve as a model for other institutions, highlighting the power of collaborative effort and shared vision in shaping the future of education.

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[35] Dr Jerome nwosu, *IAUEAA Home Coming of Members/Fund Raising for the construction of a world class Alumni Secretariat Project, welcome address* 12th November 2022

[36] Dr Christian Nwafor, *efforts made to manage the challenges faced by the IAUEAA in the development of IAUE*, interviewed by the researcher Ihuoma Emmanuel Chukwunonso 30/10/24

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