

Academic Staff Perception of Attainment of Millennium Development Goals in Some Universities Environment of South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines some contending issues that will be characterized future growth in education in the sub-Saharan Africa. Amongst such issues highlighted here include staff compensation, dwindling revenue against rising cost, funding and free education, high wastage ratios, degree mills autonomy and academic freedom, professionalisation of teaching, amongst others out of a total of 1500 lecturers in both Universities of Calabar and Uyo a sample of 200 lectures were drawn as sample size. The independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses and it was found that there is significant difference in the mean perception of lecturers in both schools in terms of the existing challenges affecting the attainment of the millennium development goals. Appropriate recommendations were made.

Key words: Universities Staffs, Academic staff Perception.

Introduction

Educational quality has been looked from different perspectives. Some scholars see it from the standpoint of values, reputation, inputs, output, content and process. Whereas others tend break it down into just output and process (Okoh 2008). From what ever dimension educational quality may be looked at, once thing seems clear that educational quality as enshrine in the education all goals (EFA) National Policy on education, (NPE) Millennium development goals (MDGS) is to angered quality in the educational system and this will essentially include the process which involves the infrastructure/ pecuniary value for both staff and students requirement and other facilities that will be required to facilitate teaching and learning.

The output dimension is the perspective for which many look at when the idea of educational quality comes to mind. Indeed it is the finished products, the performance level

which should be in agreement with the setout goals. Many bureaucrats naive scholars always look at this aspects of quality to the neglect of the inputs dimension. If the performance of educational institution is abysmally low then it may only reflect the symptoms that something is wrong which will not be unconcerned with the process of education.

It is from this background that the researchers are of the view that if the millennium development goals are to achieved by the expected time frame of (2015) then following challenges raised here must be addressed. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the millennium declaration that was adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the NU Millennium summit in September 2000.

The eight MDGs break down into 21 quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

For these goals to be achieved we need a sound and qualitative education.

Methods of study

The population for this study is 1,500 lecturers from the University of Calabar and Uyo. A sample of 200 hundred lecturers were drawn. That is one hundred lecturers from University of Calabar and another one hundred lecturers from University of Uyo, through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The challenge of attainment of millennium development goals questionnaire (CAMDGQ) was validated through appropriate experts and it was pilot tested in University of Port-Harcourt, the reliability index .68 was considered high enough for the study. The research questions were converted into research hypotheses and the independent t-test analysis was used to test the null hypotheses.

Research hypotheses

There is no significant difference between lectures perception of funding situation in Nigerian University of Calabar and Uyo.

There is no significant difference between lectures perception of teaching learning conditions in University of Calabar and Uyo.

There is no significant difference between lectures perception of autonomy and academic freedom in University of Calabar and Uyo.

There is no significant difference between lecturers of perception in the activities of degree mills in University of Calabar and Uyo.

Table 1

Independent t-test of the mean score of difference between lecturers in University of Uyo and University of Calabar on their perception of funding.

	N	\bar{X}	S²	Df	T	t-crit	Co³
Uncial	100	52.2	182.5	198	1.28	1.28	Ns
Uniuyo	100	59.7	131.9				

Where Ns is not significant

The t calculated is less than the t-critical of 0.05 level of significant at degree of freedom 198. The research therefore failed to reject the null hypotheses are conclude as such.

Table 2

Independent t-test of the mean score of differences between lecturer perception in Unical and Uniuyo on teaching learning- condition.

	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t.cal	t-crit
Uncial	100	69.4	69.8	198	3.37	2.10
Uncial	10	52.5	182.5			

Since the t calculated of 3.37 is larger than the t-critical of 2.0 the researcher than the t-reject the null hypotheses and that there is significant difference in their perception on the nature of teaching learning conditions in both universities.

Table 3

Independent t-test of mean score differences between uncial and Uniuyo lectures perception on autonomy and academic freedom.

	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t.cal	t-crit
Uncial	100	69.4	89.8	198	2.03	2.10
Uniuyo	100	59.7	131.9			

Since the calculated t-value less than t-critical at df of 198 and 0.05 level of significance. The researcher equally failed to reject the null hypothesis. Meaning that both institution hold the same view on the nature of existing autonomy and academic freedom to universities.

Table 4

Independent t-test of the mean scores of lecturers perception in Unical and Uniuyo on the activities of degree mills.

	N	\bar{X}	S²	Df	T	t-crit	Co³
Unical	100	52.2	182.5	198	1.28	1.28	Ns
Uniuyo	100	59.7	131.9				

Discussion

A small number of studies have attempted to compare faculty salaries internationally, but only a few have cast a wide geographic net and included countries of varied levels of national and economic development. In 2007, the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) launched an exploratory project attempting to do just that – collecting and comparing salary data (in World Bank in dollars) from 15 countries and one territory, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Palestine Rumbley and Pachelo 2008).

The CIHE investigated and found that overall average monthly salaries ranged from \$1,182 in China to \$6,038 in Canada. These findings produced an international average of \$4,856 per month, with Canadian academics earning on average 5.1 times more on a monthly basis than their Chinese counterparts. This current findings Nigeria is league with developments.

To put some of this information in context, it is important to consider how faculty salaries compare to some benchmark data. Here, we looked at target counties' relative positions on the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Program for comparative analysis it was not surprisingly that the countries of less advanced "human development" exhibited lower average salaries than those considered to have higher levels of human development. This scenario as capable of influencing educational quality (CIHE 2008).

There were several interesting exceptions to this rule, however. For example, Saudi Arabia, ranked no. 61 on the HDI, consistently outpaced average salary levels in Australia (no. 3), the United Kingdom (no.10). South Africa also bucked this trend to some degree. With an HDI ranking of 121, South Africa registered a higher entry-level salary average than Malaysia (no. 63), Colombia (no. 75), and China (no. 81). Even more notable, in a comparison of top-level salary averages, south Africa showed higher levels of compensation than 10 of the 15 counties studied-including Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, and France, Meanwhile, the Chinese higher education system consistently came in dead last in the international comparison of salary averages. It is difficult to place Nigeria.

Comparing faculty salaries to average per capital-income estimates indicates that the academic profession pays well in many parts of the developing world. In India, for example, average faculty salaries are a whopping 8.7 times greater than that country's average World Bank GDP monthly per capita estimate. On average, South African and Colombian academics make salaries 5.8 and 5.4 times greater, respectively, than their countries GDP per capita figures. In contrast, more developed countries-like the United Sates, Australia, Japan the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, and New Zealand-present faculty incomes that are only 1.4 to 2.2 times above their country's GDP per capita-per month figures. In Nigeria with the hope of the forth coming hybrid salary may make sense in this direction.

Available data on regional basis reveals that the growth in public support for education in middle and low-income countries improved between 1960 and 1980. It ranged

between 5.4 and 8.1; 11.3 and 14.1 and 10.2 and 13.1 for primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively. However, between 1980 and 1985, it has deteriorated to a range of 1.1 and 3.2; 6.3 and 11 and 4.9 and 11.7 for the three levels of education respectively. Countries like Latin America (Vessuri, 1989); Tanzania (UNESCO, 1994) witnessed the worst deterioration. According to Psacharopoulos and Sanyal, (1981), total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP was between 1.4% and 6.5% for Egypt, Philippines, Tanzania and Zambia between 1978 and 1979. Togo's educational budget as a percentage of national budget fluctuated between 9% 11% from 1978 to 1988 (Gorham and Dubery; 1992). The same proportion for Niger Republic for a period of either years (1990-1997) are 15.55%, 18.57%, 19.92%, 14.68%, 14.61%, 16.35%, 15.17% and 12.78% respectively (Republiue du Niger, MEN, 1999).

For Nigeria, educational funding was ranked 5th with about 10.3% of the gross public sector investment during the 1st National Development Plan of 1962-68. This position improved to 2nd during the 1970-74 plan with 13.5% allocation and retrogressed to 5th with 7.5% allocation during the 1975-80 plan. The same sector was allocated only 5.5% of total projected federal government investment during the 1981-85 plan. This declining allocation to education has become more chaotic in recent time as a result of the general economic downturn and the introduction of the structural adjustment programme. This phenomenon is similar in many of these LDCs.

The worsening dimension of this problem is that this condition of declining public funding of education for many countries is being contrasted by rising cost of education. The total costs of education has been rising generally as a result of demand pressure and hence increase in access to various levels of education. At the same time the unit cost of educating a child/students has equally been rising. The statistics for African countries in 1983 indicated that the average cost of training a university student is about 10 times their per capita income (Diambomba, 1989). The implication is that the cost of education has been growing much faster than revenue.

The consequence of these for many of the LDCs is the declining standard in the school system. Funds are not even adequate to meet running cost, capital projects are abandoned, inadequate and dilapidated facilities are common, and staff development and research are almost now non-existent in the universities and colleges. Equally, laboratories are ill equipped, dilapidated or even non-existent. The dwindling value of the national currency in the international market reveals that the present funding needs to be stepped-up at least 15 times to be able to achieve previous performance levels, which were never substantial performances in the first instance. This is certainly beyond the public capacity or governments' financial resources to accommodate.

The basic challenges that educational planners must address in this regard is how to generate fund from non-governmental sources to support educational institutions and programmes in this period of growing educational demand and depleting revenue from governmental support. Concrete policy instruments must be designed to achieve a realistic level of private sector participation in the funding of the different levels and types-of education. Issues of sharing educational burden with the individual household on the basis of social rationality of the costs and benefits of different levels of education need to be re-examined. Besides, concrete steps will also need to be taken to ensure that economic

circumstances of individuals or families do not constitute barriers to the distribution of equitable educational opportunities.

Although differences exist in the conditions for individual countries, the teaching and learning condition for many of the LDCs can be described as deplorable. The indicators include poor quality and inadequacy of teachers; lack of supervisory exercises, teaching aids, encouraging remuneration and textbooks and uncooperative school environment. In many countries, it is still common to see classes holding inside uncompleted or dilapidated buildings and under tree shades and pupils sitting on floors. For example, more than 50% of primary school pupils in the districts of Dhamar in Yemen, Bilene in Mozambique, Nyong and Mfoumou in the Cameroon and many church schools in Lesotho sit on the floor (Caillods and Postlethwaite, 1989:141). High pupil-teacher ratio with figures in the neighbourhood of 120 per class, are common in places like Nigeria, Ouagadougou, and most part of Latin America opportunity available to students is very low manifesting in high radius per pupils and high private cost of schooling. Many pupils lack the basic learning materials. Many teachers as we find in Latin America, Asia, Guatemala and Ecuador are neither trained, adequately equipped nor regularly supervised (Caillods and Postlethwaite, 1989). How can educational quality thrive under such circumstances.

The teaching condition for many countries is not better. The teaching profession which is the most critical factor in educational development has remained the most neglected and socially despised. The general neglect, depressed condition of service and poor socio-economic status that has become synonymous with the teaching profession is now having a very ugly consequence on the system. Teachers' remuneration is not only meagre and has been declining in real terms, but is rarely paid regularly. The real income of teachers is estimated to have declined between 1975 and 1984 to about 40% in Mexico; 20% in Zaire and Sudan and 80% of the salary of the least paid teacher in Ghana. The purchasing power of most Tanzanians by 1987 was just about 40-73% of the least paid teacher in 1977.

Another agonizing aspect of the teaching condition is the teaching environment. In a country like Nigeria, beside all the conditions discussed above teachers work under uncooperative conditions. The parents the society and even the students are largely uncooperative. The fact that many students are not interested in learning and parents challenge and insult teachers for implementing disciplinary measures on their children explains this. Besides, the students themselves have learnt to insult their teachers at will and the society does not seem to appreciate the teachers problems. Teachers have completely lost grip of the students they teach, because of their poor socio-economic status. The average teacher is no longer in loco parentis. Cases of students intimidating or even beating up their teachers in the secondary schools and the higher educational institutions have become rampant. Yet, co-operative environment parents, students and society are according to Majasan (1997) essential ingredients for providing quality education.

It is not surprising then that in many places, the profession no longer attracts the best, but residue or people who cannot find something better. Many people today use teaching as a stepping stone to better and more lucrative professions. There have been growing drift of trained teachers to more lucrative and socially more priced professions or jobs, either within or outside the country in countries like Sudan (Sanyal et al 1987), Ghana and Nigeria. The growing level of brain drain from the Nigerian universities and other tertiary

institutions is threatening to cripple the system. Such drifts are even easy to accomplish in the most critical disciplines (vocational and technologically oriented) where the skill training is more fluid and adaptable. Even the few who remain in the system are hardly productive as they are always sticking for non payment of salaries or busy looking for alternative means to augment their salaries. The quality of education that can be provided under such teaching and learning conditions can better be imagined than described. (Agabi 1999)

In all these manifestations, the rural areas wear the most ugly look. How these schooling conditions can be improved in the face of worsening economic and political conditions among these countries becomes a serious policy challenge from the educational planners in these societies. It is one thing to train teachers and entirely a different thing to retain and motivate them. Educational planning in LDCs must recognize the challenge of designing policies to achieve increased motivation, improved status and attract and retain highly qualified and competent personnel into the teaching professional, if the whole educational system is not to crumble. Robert Brides was not wrong when he in his book, *Testament of Beauty*, described the teacher as “the sainted pioneer of civilization, unto whom all wisdom won and all man’s future is due”. Gone are the days when teacher represent a cream of the intelligentsia, destined to live a life of decent poverty. The growing demand for teachers in contemporary world shows that the called ones are not adequate. The educational system must therefore continue to rely in greater part on teachers who are trained, not born. The trained teacher is just like any other human being. They share in the societal values, problems responsibilities and challenges. Such variables must not be lost sight of in the relevant policy design aimed at redressing such conditions.

The sum implication of dwindling revenue against rising cost, poor teaching/ learning condition and teaching manpower problem is that the quality of educational opportunity available to the citizenry in many countries are low. The result is a high wastage ratio, particularly at the primary and secondary education levels. This is manifested in high repetition and dropout rates as well as low retention and achievement rates. Although significant differences exist among countries, a survey has established that about 23 countries in Africa, 6 in Latin American and 3 in Asia had more than 20% of primary school children repeating between 1982 and 1983 (UNESCO, 1984). The percentage is higher for African countries and the condition is worsening for most of these countries.

Another dimension of this wastage rate is low retention rate or high dropout rates. According to Caillods and Postlethwaite (1989), the weighted averages of survival rates by region computer by UNESCO show that the proportion of children in primary education around 1982/83 who reach grade 4, is low. This has been established to be 64% in Latin America, 71% in Africa (23% in Portuguese speaking countries) and 85% in Asia and Oceania (p. 144). In fact further evidence reveals that the average dropout rate in primary school is about 65% in Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh and 82% and 38% in rural and urban areas of Colombia respectively. The same rate is 89%.6% and 57.5% in rural and urban areas of Guatemala respectively (Caillods and Postlethwaite, 1989). For African countries, this situation is worsening with the general down turn in the economy, rising cost of education and rising opportunity cost of pupils’ time spent in schooling. As a matter of

fact, forcing children to dropout of school so that they can engage in productive ventures and augment family income has become one of the most plausible structural adjustment programmes of low incoming households in LDCs.

The wastage from the angle of pupil achievement is even more deplorable. Many children now complete their schooling without learning anything substantial. The basic explanation is that either the teachers are not teaching, the texts and other facilities are not there or the child is never encouraged to attend school regularly.

Another dimension of educational wastage that has become chronic is the utilization of teaching manpower and other resources. The available teachers are not only inadequate but also unfairly distributed as well as inappropriately placed in relation to their training (Agabi, 1997). This explains why in many countries we have excess of teachers in many urban located schools to the disadvantage of most rural schools. In many of such cases teachers are neither over-loaded in terms of number of teaching periods and students teacher ratio, but also forced to teach subjects irrelevant to man training. These are gross manifestations of wastage as the teacher skills, experience and capability are not optimally utilized under the conditions. The same is true of the distribution and utilization of school facilities.

Agabi (1990:1997b) has discovered new dimension to wastage in higher educational places in Nigeria. This is manifested in the fact that many students in higher educational institutions re offering are type of course which they neither consider satisfactory or relevant to their future job aspirations. This is a very expensive unemployment compensation strategy.

Another area worth considering by development planners in education is the implication of recent enactments in Nigeria for university governance. Specifically, the twin issues of academic freedom and university autonomy readily come into focus here.

Institutional autonomy is granted to universities because it is essential for the search for the truth. It is therefore a protective corner which university staff always seek to cherish, but which society envies. Academic freedom is therefore granted under the auspices of the principles of university autonomy. If there is no autonomy, there can be no freedom. Thus academic freedom is a prerequisite for meaningful inquiries, while autonomy is the right to control one's affairs, in order to enhance the profession of truth and the search for knowledge. Enaowho (1990). These activities demand adequate independence of thought and action, with minimal or no supervision from outside agencies.

In view of this situation, the task of the development planner is to ensure that new developments do not impinge on these sacred rights of universities. In this respect, the credibility of Decree 16 of 1985 in Nigeria is seriously put to the test. Although section 10, subsection 1 of the said decree recognizes the special position of universities by vesting the powers of laying down standards in the National Universities Commission (NUC), as the appropriate authority, the right to autonomy and freedom has been seriously eroded in the process. As a result, NUC can now send inspectors to Nigerian universities to maintain standards, recognition of degrees and academic awards is now vested in the President, or the Head of the Federal Military Government (section 10, subsection 1). Senate is no longer the final authority in laying down standards for universities in Nigeria. This situation is most unfortunate unconventional and unacceptable.

To actualize these unprogressive changes, Section 15 of Decree 16 authorities inspectors to keep the appropriate authority (NUC) informed of the nature of instruction, academic programme, examinations, textbooks, facilities and materials in universities, in order to ascertain their adequacy for attaining minimum standards. These are the main functions for which senate and other committees have always existed in universities, hence such transfer of functions to an outside body as the NUC is a flagrant infringement, to say the least. These are likely areas of incongruence, hence development planners must take a second look to ensure that the specialist rights of universities are restored to them. Nigerian universities are ready for accreditation but more consultation is needed to avoid unnecessary friction. Definitely, this could lead to a more acceptable decree or law. For this purpose, public opinion should be mobilized for relevant amendments to a decree of this nature in Nigeria.

The Nigerian higher education system, with 297 institutions (universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education) and enrolling over 3.5 million students, is the most expansive in Africa. Highly respected in the past, the system is now sadly paled among other quality-depressing factors by activities of degree mills.

Four major institutional arrangements qualify as degree mills in the Nigerian context. These establishments constitute unapproved satellite campuses of local and foreign universities, unapproved sub degree institutions serving as affiliates of approved universities, unapproved programs run in universities, and online courses offered by rogue foreign providers. From 1995 to 2001, these “pollutants” produced annually about 15 percent of total university “graduates” in Nigeria. Between 2001 and 2004, a sharp drop in output occurred, followed by a slight rise between 2005 and 2005. By 2007, the activities of the national universities commission (NUC), the regulatory agency for the universities, induced a significant drop in the number of institutions and their enrollment. Sustenance of the momentum of the NUC clampdown is expected to reduce the activities of degree mills to no significance. It is this degree mills that illegally setup that water down educational quality.

On May 5, 2008, UNC announced the closure of 10 illegal universities. This thinned the ranks of the degree mills and signaled others in the ignoble league that UNC was close at their heels. In addition, the May 2008 mop-up accreditation of programs was another edge to the UNC sword for eliminating degree mills.

In the last three years, the national youth service corps scheme into which university graduates are fed has stepped up its regime of screening out products from bogus institutions and unapproved programs. Together, these efforts have translated into an estimated 70 percent success rate in the war against degree mills.

Conclusion

In spite of these reported illegal cases, there are also legally sanctioned activities of international providers in Nigeria’s fast-growing private higher education industry, which are reflective of some positive aspects of globalization. Some providers operate in partnership with locally licensed private universities in a manner that probably meets the UNESCO/OECD guidelines on cross-border Higher education or some of the expectations of the association of African universities in the Accra Declaration (2004) on GATS and the

Internationalization of Higher education in Africa. One of these providers is the American university of Nigeria, Yola, which has a partnership with the American university in Washington, DC, modeled after the American university of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

It is clear that the issues that seems down played in contemporary educational management are enormous and consequently the author wish to join the bandwagon of earlier scholars to commit similar offence by further ignoring some of the issues. Be that as it may it hope that what has been said to far is capable of arousing our better academic consciousness and taste for further inquiry into this scholastic field of investigation that offers would be practitioners better labour market prospect than any other field in the science of education.

Recommendations

Government and proprietors of school should as a matter of urgency implement the hybrid salary scale to cushion the effects of brain drain and enhanced staff job satisfaction.

Government should build more schools and I relocate existing areas where necessary to create optimal utilization and efficacy in the schools systems.

The government should set up national testing board with branches all over states and LGAs in the manner of United States of America National Assessment of Education Quality. These bodies shall measure the achievement of the Nigerian child from Basic to University level. Occasionally the board will take samples and compares to see how the states are faring

The national university commission should intensify their accreditation exercise to close down all unapproved degree awarding institutions in Nigeria.

The government of Nigerian should as necessity set a side the recommended 26% budgetary allocation yearly to education. This will assist to repair the decaying infrastructures and provide a meaningful learning environment for the Nigerian child.

The government should avoid over bearing influence through her agencies like National University Commission (NUC) National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) National Board for Technical Examination (NBTE) on the Administration of higher education in Nigeria.

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