

Non-Quantifiable Variables and their Influence on Nigeria's Education (Mostly University Education) and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract: Long before now attention on factors that affect the quality of education in Nigeria has been seriously focused on the quantifiable variable such as funding and students intake etc. This study decides to take objective look at those other non-quantifiable factors that equally affect the quality of education in Nigeria. These factors include poor quality intake to universities, bad management, sorting, examination malpractice, enrolment overload, cultism, etc. The study has discussed these factors and make suggestions to eliminate them. When this happens and funding is improved, education in Nigeria will resume its previous glory and contribute meaningfully to economic growth.

Key words: Education, growth, funding, examination malpractice, economic growth, non-quantifiable

INTRODUCTION

The days of Solow are over when physical capital was considered the singular variable to economic growth. Today, education has been considered an endogenized variable in the growth process. But it is important to recall that education (human capital) revolution which gained reasonable attention started with the seminal studies of economic scholars in the 50s and 60s (Blaug, 1976) and gathered momentum into the 80s and 90s. Educational contributions to growth this day is obviously noticeable (Romer, 1986, 1990; Lucas, 1988; Umo, 2007b).

The earlier acknowledged fact prompted Nigeria and other developing countries to pursue education. The story of growth of formal education in Nigeria originates with Wesleyan Methodist Society in Badagry in 1842 which opened a Christian Missionary Station there.

Nigeria has the fastest growing educational industry in African continent (Umo, 2007b). For instance, in 1960, Nigeria had two universities (Universities of Ibadan and Nigeria, Nsukka) with student enrolment of about 1,400. Forty four years after, Nigeria had >77 universities, an increase of 75 universities and percentage increase of 3,750. Primary schools as at 1960 were 15,703 and increased to 50,741 in 2004, an increase of 35,038 or percentage increase of 233.

The number of secondary schools was 88 in 1950 and increased to 10,913 in 2004, an increase of 10,030 or percentage increase of 1,136. In terms of student intake the 77 universities had an intake of about 1.6 million in 2004 and increase of 1,598,600 or 11419 percentage increase compared with an intake of 1400 in 1960. Primary school intake in 1960 was about 2,912,618 and rose to

20,037,480 in 2004, an increase of 17,124,862 or 558 percentage increase. For secondary schools, the intake in 1960 was 135,364 and rose to 5,388,734 in 2004, an increase of 5,253,370 or percentage increase of 3881 (Adawo, 2008).

But these expansions are observed with some statistical inferences on how effective the education commodity has been delivered. For instance, Table 1 showing country, pupil/teacher ratio, growth indices (1980-85) and contribution of education to growth.

Table I shows that pupil/teacher ratio is low in Nigeria and with negative growth indices of -0.35 for the period 1980-85 and also with lowest contribution of education to economic growth.

Brief incursion to education's mandates in Nigeria:

Nigeria is of the opinion that education can help its growth and it evolved educational philosophy in that direction. The five main national objectives of education as stated in the second National Development Plan and endorsed as the necessary foundation for National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998) are the building of:

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

Nigeria's philosophy of education is therefore based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary

Table 1: Pupil/teacher ratio and growth indices (1980-85)

| Location | Pupil/teacher ratio | | Growth indices (%) | | Education contribution (%) | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| | Primary | Secondary | Country | Percentage | Country | Percentage |
| Industrialized countries | 18 | 14 | Nigeria | -0.35 | Nigeria | 16.0 |
| SSA | 26 | 26 | Ghana | 1.40 | Ghana | 22.2 |
| Ghana | 29 | 18 | Coted'vore | 1.50 | Canada | 25.0 |
| Nigeria | 39 | 27 | Kenya | 3.50 | | |
| | | | Senegal | 3.20 | | |
| | | | SSA | 2.10 | | |

Adam (2003); Adedeji and Bamidele (2003)

and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). The quality of instructions as contained in received documents has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals
- Faith in man's ability to make national decisions
- Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations
- Shared responsibility for the common good of society
- Respect for the dignity of labour
- Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children

One of the national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked to the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and completeness both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contributes to the development of the society.

Governments were to take various measures to implement the policy as education was considered a highly rated instrument in the national development plans as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an educational revolution. Government therefore set out step by step plans to implement primary education, secondary education, higher education including professional education, technical education, adult and non-formal education. University education was to be pursued with emphasis on research to expand knowledge horizon and lead to improved technology.

The problem: Nigeria has invested in formal education for a period not <167 years (1842-2009). The number of primary schools has grown to over 50,000 post primary schools over 8,300 and universities over 77 in number. Nigeria's higher institutions have been turning out not <120,000 graduates yearly.

Education expansion in Nigeria does not seem to equally match with expansion in economic growth, so also improvement in knowledge acquisition leading to occupying a space in today's world of knowledge

economy. For instance, between 1970 and 1980 growth in primary school was 141%. For the post primary institution, the percentage increase within the same period was 133 and 157% between 1980 and 2000. Tertiary institutions percentage increase between 1970 and 1980 is 160% and between 1980 and 2000 is 101%.

Even more astronomical is the student intake at various levels of school. Alongside is the fact that observing growth of the GDP per capita was -15.0, -7.7, -5.1 and -4.4 measured in percentages point for the years 1981, 1984, 1990 and 1999, respectively. For Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), Umo (2007a) states the following: South Africa 5.08, Mauritius 4.32, Egypt 3.77 and Nigeria 1.55 on a scale of 10. The simple observation here is that Nigeria stands at the bottom of knowledge economy.

However, much of emphasis long before now on Nigeria's education dismal contribution to economic growth has been placed on poor funding. Though this is a bane, this study wishes to take a look at some other factors outside funding-mostly non quantifiable factors. This forms the major objective of this study.

The rest of this study will place more emphasis on factors that affect university education because of the role of university education in nation building. The quantity of university education in Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s was high and can compete favourably with products of international universities.

Today, opinions converge among the lecturers themselves, government, employers, parents and the entire society that the quality of education in Nigerian Universities has sunken. This is not only true of university education but also true of other lower levels of education.

Some of the factors responsible for this jinx include poor quality intake, management, sorting, examination malpractice, enrolment overload, cultism, pursuit of certificates than knowledge, strikes, brain drain, poor remuneration to teachers, students refusal to attend classes, quality of teachers and lack of room for merits.

Poor quality intake: There is the problem of poor quality intake leading to Garbage-In Garbage-Out (GIGO). Poor quality intake to universities originate from syndicated

examination malpractices of which the parents, teachers and the students are participants. Some teachers work answers to questions for students during NECO, WASSCE and even UME examinations at an agreed fee.

Such students enter university without ever cultivating the habit of reading or learning and rather turn academic liability both to the university and the society. This phenomenon could be traced to how Nursery Schools are run. It is common observation to see parents do home work for their wards in the Nursery school to be presented to the class teacher the following day. The child grows up with the impression that learning cannot be done independently. Finally, the child learns to depend on others in his/her academic pursuit.

Bad management: Management is a serious determining factor in the success of a business. Some university managements hardly have harmonious industrial relationship with various unions on campuses neither do they exhibit thorough prudence in appropriating whatever little fund that are in their disposal. Misplacement of priorities has dangerously added to the deterioration of educational facilities on different campuses. Moreso, some entitlements to staff are not willingly and readily paid until strikes are threatened.

Sorting: Sorting is an invented term that permeated university system in the 1990s. Sorting means a situation where a lecturer collects money or gift from either a failed or near-failed student and exchange an excellent or a pass grade in favour of the student. This ugly development started in 1992 when Babangida was the Nigeria's military president. Lecturers were paid killer salaries and all efforts to cause government to redress the situation failed.

Then some lecturers collected money from students either to make ends meet or to help draw government's attention to the matter of starvation salary. The prevalence of sorting is damaging to education system generally because the monster has walked to the secondary school system. The implication is that instead of students to study and acquire the required and necessary skill for their personal development and that of the economy, they rather assemble money to buy grades and completely ignore their studies. The end result is certificates with empty heads.

Examination malpractice: Examination malpractice has many facets to its existence. Some students come to examination hall with already prepared materials suspecting them to be possible answers to questions. Some hire some other student to write the examinations for the bona fide student. This is abetted by long period

it takes to issue genuine identify cards to students at different levels and the manipulation that encourages possession of fake identify cards. Sometimes the examination candidate connives with others outside the examination hall to send the examination question paper outside for the questions to be properly answered and to return to the student who arranged the deal for him/her to submit to the examiner or the invigilator. In some development the student from outside the examination hall may be texting answers to question to the one in the examination hall through mobile phone services (GSM). When the examination question is objective in nature, students can resort to using different fingers to represent different letters A-E and therefore communicate answers to questions within themselves in the examination hall to the ignorance of the invigilator.

Sometimes a brilliant student in the examination hall after attempting the required number of questions exchanges his/her script with a dull student and attempts the questions for him/her. Also, a student may intentionally exposed his worked script to some other student close to him to copy. Or a student may write some answers on examination question paper and exchange it with some other student. Some fair-skinned female students copy suspected answers to questions on their laps and come into examination hall with it on the assumption that it will be indecent for any male invigilator to search her to that level.

At the secondary/higher school level, examination malpractice is a syndicated business that involves principal, parents, students, hired assistants and sometimes West African Examination Council officials and officials of the Ministry of Education.

The principal decides on how much the students would pay and the parents pay through their wards and the principal appropriates the money, part to himself to the hired assistants or the course/subject teacher who may care to participate and part to WAEC officials and officials of the Ministry of Education who may come for inspection.

Enrolment overload: Enrolment overload is admitting too many students than both teachers and teaching facilities could sustain. In many federal government universities, there are not enough classrooms for the students let alone seats for them. This has led to poor classroom management, increasing noise making, while classes are on and hatred for learning. With a very large class size and lack of public address system language of instruction hardly reach all the students. Learning becomes more boring than what it is expected to be. Large class sizes also create problem in terms of examination supervision and worst experience if the course involves practicals.

Cultism: Cultism directs attention of a member away from academics to seeking non-existing glory in vain matters. Cult members do not have peace nor do they allow peace on various campuses. Leading problem in cultism is admitting non-academic students into the university. And because they do not belong to academics, they sit back to practice what they belong. This is a spill-over effect of examination malpractice through which they found admission into universities. In some instances, academic programmes/examinations are disrupted because of cult operations. They rein mayhem on fellow students or cult members, lecturers and sometimes to unknown persons. Again, part of the problem is that from 1980s federal government had stopped building hostels on university campuses.

The truth is that 80% of the student population on any campus live outside the university. Therefore these people have unrestrained time/opportunity to meet and carry out their nefarious activities. Ever increasing member of cults on campuses points to the fact that we are increasingly admitting vices either consciously or unconsciously into our social and academic systems. Cultism works against academic excellence.

Pursuit of certificate than knowledge: Pursuit of certificate than knowledge points to the fact that there is increase schooling in Nigeria without increase learning. The quality of output from Nigerian schools confirm this assertion. At the market place especially the public sector, undue emphasis is on paper qualification coupled with high level of nepotism at the job place. Merit which should to some extent, expose an applicant to some level of learning he has acquired is not given recognition.

Strike: Another serious problem that faces the university system is strike. Table 2 shows the year and the duration of strike. Between 1993 and 2003 strike has caused a closure of 36 months or 3 years in the university. The associated set-back that follows strike is that schemes of work are not always completed and examinations are arranged ad hoc perhaps to cover the lost time. Students

lost focus of academics during the strike period and are exposed to disjointed flow of instructions from lecturers. From Table 2, it is observed that strikes in the university system is almost a yearly ritual.

Except between 1996 and 1999 other strides occur on yearly basis. There was a five-year academic peace between 2003 and 2008 and strike erupted again by July 2009 and as at the time this study was prepared it had already entered its third month. For the strike of 2009 the plus (+) sign after the third month means it is not yet certain when the strike is likely to end. Of course, the cause (s) of the strike include poor remuneration to teachers, lack of or poor facilities and conflict between management and staff of the universities.

Brain drain: Education plays a powerful role in the growing problem of the international migration of high level educated workers-the so called brain drain from poor to rich countries (Todaro and Smith, 2002). To summarise the effects of brain drain, the statements from Todaro and Smith (2002) are better describe here: The brain-drain has denied developing countries opportunities of solving teething problems such as appropriate technology, promotion of low cost preventive health care, the construction of low cost housing, hospitals, schools and other service facilities, the design and building of functional yet inexpensive labour intensive roads, bridges and machinery, the development of relevant university teaching materials such as appropriate introductory economics texts and the promotion of problem-oriented research and vital domestic issues.

Such needs are often as dominated by rich country ideas as to what represents true professional excellence, those highly educated and highly skilled LDC professionals who do not physically migrate to the developed nations nevertheless migrate intellectually in terms of the orientation of their activities. The internal brain drain is much more serious than the external one.

Finally, some academic economists teach and research totally irrelevant, sophisticated mathematical models of non-existent competitive economies, while problems of poverty, unemployment, rural development and education are considered less intellectually captivating. In all these diverse professional activities, performance criteria are often based not on contributions to national development but rather on praise from the international community (professional mentors in the developed nations) the verdict is clear: in many dimensions the educational system of most developing countries is in need of reforms (Ibid).

Poor remuneration: Poor remuneration to teachers has not made the job competitive. Under this condition there are only a few people who have natural inclination to

Table 2: Year and duration of strike (1993-2009)

| Years | Months of closure |
|-------|-------------------|
| 1993 | 3.00 |
| 1994 | 6.00 |
| 1995 | 4.00 |
| 1996 | 7.00 |
| 1999 | 1.50 |
| 2000 | 2.00 |
| 2001 | 3.00 |
| 2002 | 0.25 |
| 2003 | 6.00 |
| 2009* | 3.00+ |

Okebukola, 2006

teaching enjoys the job with corresponding appreciative psychic income. Others settle with teaching as a last resort which implies that the profession has chosen them and not they choosing the profession. This in turn affects the quality of teachers that are in the teaching profession. In most cases some teachers engage in moon-lighting and battle with condition of divided or shared interest. The effects of these are lack of quality time to prepare the lessons or lectures and one mindedness during the period of imparting the knowledge. Finally, the knowledge imparted is sub-standard and sub-optimal.

Absenteeism in classes: Current observation on university campuses points to the fact that there is increasing absenteeism during classes by the students. Apart from the fact that in some campuses there are not enough desks or chairs on which students can sit and receive lectures, if all members of the class attend lecture at the same time, yet in some cases the few seats available are not fully occupied by students during classes.

Classes to some or majority of the students are punitive and they willfully stay away from lectures, going after hedonism and pleasure laden activities. However, a possible explanation to this could be linked with the sorting syndrome earlier discussed. When students are sure they can buy their grades, it is easy for them to abandon learning which by nature is labourious and irksome. But class abandonment correlates negatively with knowledge acquisition.

Hiring a good teacher: There is a problem of hiring a good teacher. In Nigeria, teaching profession is not strictly regulated and people come into it at will and also leave at will. In the face of a highly saturated labour market, teaching seems to be the only leeway that infinitesimally reduces unemployment. But a rather unfortunate development is that this profession is dominated by less than first = rate minds.

This is understandably so for the fact that the teachers are so lowly paid, therefore the profession does not attract first-rate brain. More importantly teaching ability is not closely related with training and experience (Hanushek, 2005), however, these variables are necessary but not sufficient for good teaching, the gifted component is there. As mention before, teaching should be reserved for top-brain candidates.

CONCLUSION

Good amount of literature has been generated on quantifiable factors that adversely affect the quality of education in Nigeria, mostly inadequate funding. However, this paper does not play down on importance of

adequate funding but decides to look at non-quantifiable factors which are equally important. The paper has mentioned some to include poor quality into university, bad management, sorting, examination malpractice, enrolment overload, cultism, poor remuneration to teachers, strikes, etc.

The study has also made effort to proffer solutions to the identified problems. At the same time the study notices that some of the variables discussed in it are not strictly non-quantifiable example being remuneration to teachers, enrolment overload and perhaps any other and therefore appeal for non-sanction. The problem is that there is no water-tight division between quantifiable and non-quantifiable variables as far as they pose problems toward quality of education in Nigeria.

The non-quantifiable variables so far discussed have adversely affected the quality of education in Nigeria and mostly university education. It has contributed to most of the graduates' inability to find jobs and some of them are unemployable and can therefore hardly contribute to economic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preparatory schools for university education are primary and secondary schools. Highly qualified and dedicated teachers should be recruited to lay solid educational foundation at these early stages of children's learning. Educational qualification aside, only those teachers who are practically tested to be qualified should be those to recruit to teach. It is only knowledgeable teachers that can produce knowledgeable pupils/students. A well-trained child can make a good quality in-take into the university.

A bone of contest between various unions on university campus and the university management is always delaying, withdrawal or denial of benefits to the staff. University management should be truthful to staff, accord personnel welfare into their priority matrix and pay what is due them timely. Denial of privileges and rights and language of disrespect from management to staff always bring disharmony. Therefore, management that wants to succeed should hold periodic congress with staff and exchange ideas on conditions/positions affecting both parties and respect whatever agreements entered.

Where, there is misunderstanding between management and staff an arbitration committee made up of honest and respectable personalities should be appointed to unbiasedly settle the matter, provided both parties are honest to the matter. Because sorting is a secretized transaction between the student and the

lecturer therefore its control is somehow difficult. This study therefore recommends conference marking where students examination scripts are assessed in the open. In addition, a control committee could be appointed to randomly check the gradings of each lecturer.

Examination malpractice is a syndicated fraud which is always uneasy to control. At the secondary school level, special examination centres should be constructed and then group school by school according to proximity to write their examinations there. Individual secondary schools should not be allowed to conduct West African Senior Secondary Examinations and National Examination Council examination on their various campuses.

Candidates should write their examinations at these central examination centres for effective checks and control which can eliminate drastically examination malpractices. At the university level emphasis can be placed on open examinations that task both the knowledge and wisdom of a student than secret examinations that call for give me what I gave you. Effective class management is very necessary for good educational result. Enrolment overload makes proper class management very difficult. The present irony is that while educational facilities are rapidly decaying, it is followed with explosive admissions. Without public address systems, language of instruction hardly reach all the students. Therefore admission should be trimmed down in line with available facilities and personnel.

Government should make efforts to provide hostels for students in the universities as these in 1960s and 1970s. When majority of the students are housed in hostels, it will minimize the uncontrolled nocturnal and nefarious activities always being carried outside by students living outside the university completely unchecked. Again, parents/guardians should be made to sign an undertaking at the point of admitting their wards that should they be involved in cultism, they will automatically be expelled.

Aside certificate at completion of a given programme students should be subjected to oral examinations which will be devoid of any form of examination malpractice in his chosen field of study before he graduates. This will to some extent check cases of long certificates without accompanying knowledge. Oral examinations can carry 50% of a student's work and written examinations 50%.

Incessant strikes make nonsense of Nigeria's university education. Most strikes in the university system is a handout of federal governments/unseriousness, uncommittedness and insincerity in funding university education. Some important people in government own private universities and their long run interest is to kill public universities so that their private

universities should strive. Adequate commitment is needed from federal government to end avoidable strikes in the system. Seed funding is highly recommended here.

There is need to pay lecturers living wage. It is only in Nigeria that a ward councilor earns higher than a university professor. Reasonable salaries are long overdue to attract and keep the best brain in the system.

We have offered recommendation to check enrolment overload. If class sizes are reduced, class management will become effective and possible for lecturers to check attendance.

The condition should be that and until a student attains 60% class attendance he should not be qualified to write semester examinations. The case is that even when such policies are on the ground, it may be difficult for a lecturer to implement it given extra large classes. Effective checking of class attendance can cause most students to attend classes.

Assuming that the working conditions of the teacher are improved, effort should be made to reserve the teaching job for the best brain. The present spade of brain drain is harmful to Nigeria's economy.

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