

Editorial

University Education in Africa

I welcome you to the maiden issue of this journal - *Review of Higher Education in Africa*. The birth of any journal is always a thing of joy to those interested in research and the extension and dissemination of knowledge. This journal, centered on higher education in Africa, is especially welcome given the paucity of publications on African higher education as compared to publications from other regions, the fact that publishing in Africa is slowly grinding to a halt as a result of the economic and financial situation confronting many African countries and the fact that information in libraries in many African universities, colleges of education and colleges of technology is a little old (what with less foreign exchange money to subscribe to international journals and the fact that it is difficult to publish locally).

On a recent visit to Nigeria, I spoke with some university professors and interested educators on the state of university education in Nigeria. I read some of the daily newspapers published in Nigeria to glean information on the university system especially since faculty and staff in Federal and state universities were on strike when I was visiting. Having taught at the University of Jos, Nigeria from 1980 to April 1989, I was well aware of ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities) strikes and the problems besetting university education in Nigeria: faculty salaries, funding, resources and facilities, whether to have students more accountable for their education by making them pay fees, issue of access and quality control and cults etc. The ongoing ASUU strike, commentaries in Nigerian newspapers and comments by university professors in journals show that these problems and issues remain (Nwakuma 2009). In other African countries too, problems abound in the university system. In Kenya, access for many students remains a problem and the Joint Admissions Board has lowered the entry points to allow more students to gain admission (Buchere, 2009b). In South Africa, the issue of public financing of higher education has been reported by Wangenge-Ouma, Cleote and Cleote (2008). In reporting the problems confronting African universities, the Association of African Universities (2004) pointed out that these included deterioration of services and quality, recruitment of staff with mediocre ability and HIV/AIDS.

Notwithstanding these issues, tremendous progress has occurred in African universities during this decade. These improvements can be organized in six broad areas:

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- a. Access - For one, there has been an expansion in numbers attending universities- in Nigeria, for example, the number of undergraduate students jumped from 654, 856 in 2005 to 959,696 in 2006 (Etim, 2009, Okogie, 2008) Access has also increased for women at this level.
 - b. Continued collaboration with foreign donors and universities and organizations. For example, in Nigeria, the McArthur Foundation is working with four universities (Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello, Bayero and Port Harcourt) to increase technology use. (MacArthur, 2009). Teferra (2009) in noting the continued collaboration has also pointed out the pitfalls resulting from foreign collaborative efforts on education in Africa.
 - c. Quality assurance through institution of accreditation visits and reports. In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission has done frequent accreditation visits to the universities. In a recent report, Okogie (2008) documents the accreditation process in Nigerian universities and how that has led to improved quality education. In East Africa, Buchere, (2009 a) reports on the ongoing efforts to improve the quality offering among universities in East Africa.
 - d. Faculty development from within. Many of the universities in Africa have opened graduate and doctoral programs for the training of faculty. Although some faculty members still go abroad for training, there has been an increase in the number graduating from “local” universities.
 - e. The introduction of and use of ICT for instructional purposes. Universities in Nigeria (Jos, Port Harcourt and Bayero University, Kano) have increased the use of technology for instruction. The Federal Government of Nigeria has also sped the process with the introduction of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). In East Africa, the use of ICT in higher institutions has been explored by Anthony and Muliaro (2008) and Tibenderana and Ogao (2008).
 - f. The growth in private universities has occurred in many parts of Africa-Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya (Mahlubi, 2007) These institutions have helped open access to higher education for more students. The general drawback is that the tuition and fees are normally higher than those paid by students attending public universities. This then limits the students to those from families who are able to afford these higher fees.

Given these advances, it must also be pointed out that moving forward, urgent problems need to be tackled- the ravages of HIV/AIDS, the lack of emphasis and the low output of graduates in the technical, engineering and medical areas, the fact that ICT hardware and software is for the most part imported and may not be suitable if adopted wholly to the African condition and the need to develop materials used in instruction with more local examples.

Review of Higher Education in Africa is a peer review journal focused on reporting innovative studies on all aspects of higher education. Areas of focus include (but not limited to the following):

- Policy
- Management
- education research
- costs and funding of higher education
- private and public funding of higher education
- education and development
- globalization and Africa's higher education
- general factors shaping higher education in Africa

There are four papers in this maiden issue. Lewis' article "Challenges on Managing Change: the Case of Performance Management System at the University of Botswana" tackles head on the issue of faculty assessment and remuneration. As this is an age old problem, the challenges in implementing the performance management system in an African system is worth reading. In the second article, Majavu in "The Political Economy of African Higher Education" explores the impact of the World Bank and the IMF on the direction of higher education in Africa, especially in the area of capacity building in the financial and economic sector. In "Higher Education and the Rise of Early Political Elites in Africa", Bassey argues that higher education was the launching path to political elite status in Africa. Finally, Ubong and Wokocha in their paper, "Continuous Assessment, Practicum and the Quality of Business Education Program in Nigeria" advocate for the wider use of continuous assessment and more practicum experiences for students in the Business Education program.

Any journal is as good as the quality of the contributions and the hard work of the reviewers and the Editorial Board. This Journal will not be an exception. To this end, the Editorial Board will like to solicit for papers for the next issue of the Journal. Reviewers, especially those currently working in higher institutions in Africa are also welcome to apply to the Editor.

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