

POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES MUTUALLY REINFORCING MEDIOCRITY IN CROSS RIVER STATE TERTIARY EDUCATION

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The adage that all animals are equal but some are more equal than the other has significance to this discussion on inequalities and allocation of values in higher education system in Cross River State of Nigeria. In the past and even more recently, occupants of departmental headship, faculty Deanship, Institute Directorship etc appears characterize by political undertones. Available evidence showed that holding of such offices is essentially determine by the choice of super ordinates rather than merits. This phenomenon contradicts the purpose for which autonomy and academic freedom was granted higher education systems. Under this circumstances the search for truth and knowledge suffers even in knowledge society, due to the over bearing influence and politicking of chief executives of higher institute of learning in cress river state. The situation is worse off when ethno-racial, social geographic origin becomes factors of consideration for appointive officers in higher institutions of learning this background in effect contradicts the very essence of the first goal o Nigeria National Policy on Education which is intended to inculcate National consciousness and unity amongst Nigeria citizens.

This paper therefore consider the following as variables for the study

- A. The activities of admissions committees
- B. Appointment of Heads of Departments ,(elections of Deans of Faculties and Director of institutes.
- C Activities of Anti-corruption agencies
- D Appointments and promotion of staff.

A sample of 250 academic staff where were drawn as the sample size from the total population of 800. Lecturers in the three institutions of higher learning in the state through stratified random sampling technique. The institutions were used as strata

The politics of education and social inequalities questionnaire (PESIQ), was validated and pretested for reliability and the reliability coefficient of 65 was derived. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the independent t-test analysis was used to test the null hypothesis. The result of the study showed that there is no significant difference between colleges of education and universities in Cross River State of Nigeria in terms of; the activities of admission committees, the politics of appointments of heads of Department and elections of Deans of faculties, the nature of activities of anticorruption as well as the appointments and promotions of staff. It was recommended that for inequalities to be eliminated then the system of should play down on politics, so that it will not be allowed to interfere with official decisions. Everybody should be given his or her own dues amongst others.

Keywords: Education, Tertiary institute and Social Inequality

INTRODUCTION

Social inequality refers to a lack of social equality. Where individuals in a society do not have equal social status. Areas of potential social inequality include voting rights. Freedom of speech and assembly, the extent of property rights and access to education health care and other social goods.

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Inequality is socially created by matching two different kinds of processes.

Social inequality is different from economic inequality but the two inequalities are linked. Economic inequality refers to disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income. While economic inequality is caused by the unequal distribution of wealth Social inequality exists because the lack of wealth in certain areas prohibits these people from obtaining the same housing, health care etc as the wealthy in societies where access to these social goods depends on wealth. "The degree of inequality in a given reward or asset depends of course on its dispersion or concentration across the individuals in the population.

Social inequality is also linked directly to racial inequality and wealth inequality. The way people behave socially, whether it's discrimination, racism etc it tends to trickle down on the opportunities and wealth individuals can generate for themselves. African American". Shapiro strives to demonstrate how unequal the "playing field" is for Black and Whites. For instance, middle class families, one black and the other white, are giving different opportunities in the housing market. The black family is denied a loan from the bank for housing. While the white family is approved. This is a noticeable incident. Considering that homeownership is one of the main ways Americans acquire wealth. Social inequality is the expression of lack of housing, health care, education, employment opportunities, politics, and status. 115 the exclusion of people from full and equal participation in what we, the members of society, perceive as being valuable.

Economic inequality is expressed through the unequal distribution of wealth in society. This has obvious ramifications in terms of the unequal distribution of what that wealth may purchase; housing, health care, education, career prospects, status - in our society, access to all these things is largely dependent on wealth (Albatch, 2006) and (Ataehene, 2007). Social inequality is the expression of lack of access to housing, health care, education, employment opportunities, and status. It is the exclusion of people from full and equal participation in what we, the members of society, perceive as being valuable, important personally worthwhile and socially desirable.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Within the context of knowledge intensive societies, social inequality and politics of education have become very prominent on the agenda of higher education policy making at the national and institutional levels. Government is increasingly acknowledging the importance. There is a high correlation between "working class"/underclass and a position down the bottom of the scale of income, education, job opportunities, material possessions, home ownership and control over one's life. Ethnic background is also an indicator of migrants and Aborigines are represented in working class/underclass strata and under-represented in the top strata.

Class may be about self identity and snobbery (which goes both ways), but it is primarily about inequality; the unjustifiable distribution of opportunity, power and life chances. There is a mythology of equal opportunity in Australia and class mobility (for a minority of individuals).. The reality is that social class limits the life chances of most Australians. Class is cyclical and therefore "keeps people in their place" (good if you're in the top strata, not so good if you're in the bottom strata). Mobility is possible, though true mobility is rare. It can be downward as well as upward-there is currently increasing deskilling and erosion of middle class jobs and salaries. Disadvantaged groups remain disadvantaged. The growth of a self-perpetuating underclass (the poor, unemployed, chronically ill, aged pensioners, single parents-(mostly women-85%) and Aborigines further contributes to social polarization and powerlessness.

Superficially, class is about how you speak, where you live and how much conspicuous consumption you display. Nigeria and Australia, like any capitalist country, is characterized by economic inequalities. Some people gain a considerable income from invested capital, while the majority depends on the sale of their labour (actually working for a living). Others depend on social security for survival and are, in effect, excluded from the mainstream economy, with the result that they are excluded from life chances and life choices. Of nine OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations studied in 1994, Only the USA had a more polarized distribution of income than Australia (that is, extremes of wealth and poverty).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education in Ghana has suffered a myriad of challenges such as accessibility, faculty recruitment and retention, and a deplorable state of infrastructure due to poverty and macroeconomic instabilities of the country. However, the diminishing resources and the growing demand for participation remain the biggest threat to higher education in Ghana including politicking at the institutional levels.

Statistics provided by Paul Effah, the executive secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education in Ghana indicate that in 2000 the higher education budget was \$23,870,359, which constituted 12 percent of the total government education discretionary budget distributed among public universities and eight polytechnics. This state of affairs has adversely affected higher education in the country. As a result, each year over half qualified applicants seeking entrance to universities and polytechnics do not obtain

admission, due to limited academic facilities. (Atuaehene 2007). The Mismanagement of these funds was not unconnected with political considerations.

Although they are not often described as such, colleges and universities in the United States and many other national contexts are political institutions. The significant public costs and allocate essential public benefits in a process determined by political action. The key issues of resource allocation and regulation for higher education in the United States are served by adjudication of various demands through state and national political structures. This factor provides powerful incentives for postsecondary institutions to make their interests clear in the political process.

Lobbying represents one of the most effective forms of political action-devoting human and financial resources to raising issues, information, and arguments before legislators and individuals a position to influence legislation. In the United States postsecondary lobbying has increased significantly over the past two decades as public and private nonprofit institutions have sought "earmarked" funding from the US congress. Working individually, with hired lobbyists through associations, nonprofit and for-profit institutions have also endeavored to influence legislation on a variety of higher education issues, as have private student-loan providers and others pursuing education-related commerce.

One of the responses by Kenyatta University to contain possible backlash was to restrict lecturers in particular disciplines from teaching specific topics or giving particular examples a clear gagging of academic freedom. Equally, banning social meetings (even if only temporarily) is an infringement on individual rights of association. It is insincere that such meetings can be banned when students from one ethnic community heavily represented in university administration are able to caucus freely in the offices of these administrators and lecturers. The many examples of insincerity on the campus are further evidence in the caution staff received against using their mother tongue. It is common knowledge in the country that the members of one ethnic community have almost institutionalized the use of mother tongue in what are otherwise public offices in the three years of the current administration. (Otieno 2007)

Clearly, some of the measures amount to bribery. Kenyatta University is known to normally insist on a 100 percent fees payment before admission. However, this time around, tocoirt students, this condition has been waived. Students are therefore happy because they have been given a reprieve where: they are most vulnerable; finances. Any pacification, as in Kenyatta's case, that ameliorates students' financial burden is one of the most powerful tools of appeasement. Unfortunately, for Kenyatta, as soon as normalcy returns, the waiver is likely to be dispensed with. And this may just bring more trouble on campus. This phenomenon is not different schools in many developing economies.

University admission procedures play a critical role in determining who has access to such training, and therefore, to the many opportunities and benefits. Procedures and priorities of the process vary widely from country to country. Some admissions practices are commercial objective and look at a single entrance examination score. Other procedures are quite subjective and consider portfolio of examination scores, academic performance, references, and extracurricular work of a prospective student. Multiple admissions systems may also be used within a particular country; such systems sometimes vary between public and private institutions. Damtew (2007).

This study, sponsored by the world bank, examined one piece of the tertiary admissions puzzle undergraduate university admissions policies and procedures worldwide. The Scope was limited to undergraduate admissions in the public university sector, the specific activities undertaken to admit students and the primary or dominant system used in each country. This article presents the admissions topology Every country needs, to maintained essential control over the academic institutions. At the same time, Individuals universities need an adequate degree of autonomy and academic freedom

if they are to flourish. For almost all Nigerian universities have defined themselves as institute' with core educational mission and common understanding of the value of the academic yet this is done with political inclination. This political dimension is exemplified in the Monash Universities. A well known Australian institution established for profit making and with branches overseas. The university of Chicago's business school has open branches in Spain and Singapore, universities in China devote much attention to profit making (Albatch 2006) universities in Africa and particularly

Nigeria has set consultancy programmes in the given of providing access but in reality expending the frontier of their pecuniary value. Governments and their policies can influence these forces-they can retard them• exacerbate them. One example of government policy, which we can examine as an example of instructional inequality, is tax reform. Just about everybody is in agreement that the current tax system is not equitable however, there is significant debate about what form tax reform should take. I do not wish to enter into any political debate-my analysis here is simply from the perspective of the institutionalized maintenance of social inequality.

The current tax debate focuses on a Goods and Services Tax (an extra charge on any product or service) eliminated before the GST is imposed. This would mean that some goods, especially luxury goods that currently attract a high sales tax, could be significantly cheaper under a GST system. An examination of statistics published in the journal of the Australian Council of Social Services, April 1999, reveals the following:

- While 31% of taxpayers earn less than \$20,000pa, the tax cut for a person on \$20,000 pa would be \$10pa, which is 2.6% of that income.
- 88% of taxpayers earn less than \$50,000pa. The proposed tax cut on \$50,000 pa is \$52pa-or 5.4% of that income
- 96% of taxpayers earn less than \$75,000pa. the proposed tax cut on \$75,000 is \$86, or 11.3% of that income. The tax cut remains at \$86pa for incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000pa. only 1% of taxpayers earn \$100,000 or above. The wealthier one is (on the whole) the bigger the tax cut benefit. Yet everyone needs to purchase

goods and will thus have to pay the GST.

Lower income earners will obviously lose more of their tax cut because of the GST charges than higher income earners. For example, a person on \$30,000 will lose two-thirds of his/her tax cut on GST cost increases, while someone on \$80,000 will lose just over one-quarter. The higher the income, the more benefits gained from this system. People on welfare pay the extra GST charge on the goods and services they buy. A system that benefits the wealthy and further retards the poor is an example of institutional inequality. The GST proposals are currently under negotiation and the end product may prove to be more equitable.

A 1979 Carnegie study ("small futures: children, inequality, and the limits of liberal reform", Richard de Lone principal investigator) found that a child's future to be largely determined by social status not brains. Consider bobby and jimmy two second graders, who both pay attention in a classroom, do well, and have nearly identical I.Q.S. yet bobby is the son of a successful

lawyer; jimmy's works infrequently as custodial assistant. Despite their similarities, the difference in the circumstances to which they were born makes it 27 times more likely that bobby will get a job that by time he is in late IOs will pay him an income in the top tenth of all incomes in this country, jimmy had about one chance in eight of earning even a median income.

Now, three decades later, the projected inequality of fates of bobby and jimmy's second grade successors is even greater. For a variety of reasons to be here explored, inequality in the united state has increase to the extent that the gap between the rich and poor is larger now than at time since 1928 greater than that of any industrialized nation (see Edward [J. Wolffs 1995 top Heavy: A study of increasing inequality of wealth in America. I twentieth century fund and his "the rich get Richer: and why the poor don't) A 2007 study of the congressional office Bureau found the wealth of the richest 1 percent of Americans totaled \$16.8 trillion, \$2 trillion more than combined of the lower 90 percent of the population. The center for American progress reported low between 1979 and 2007 the average income of the bottom 50 percent of American households grew by 6% the top 1% saw their income increase by 229 percent. Such statistics (see injustice studies refereed electronic journal out Illinois State for more) raise many questions including: is inequality inevitable? Is inequality desirable or undesirable for social progress in improving the quality of life for the vast majority of people? What determines the variability of inequality across the nations of the world? Are there disparities between the haves and have not that lead to social -evolution? Is inequality at least in terms of income and wealth, really a social problem? Can there be economic inequality and yet political equality? Can, for instance, capitalism coexist with democracy? In capitalist economies, who should provide the safety nets for those compete, such as because of age or physical or mental disabilities?

There is a clear relationship between higher qualifications and higher earnings, and the earnings premium for possessing a degree is particularly high. The average gross weekly income of full time employees in the UK with a degree was \$632 in spring 2003. This was more than double the weekly income of \$298 for those with no qualifications.

The likelihood of being employed is also higher for those with higher qualification. In spring 2003, 88 percent of working as adults with a degree were in full-time employment compared with 50 percent of those with no qualifications. Education is also key in explaining the inequality gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in terms of health, living standards and social participation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the mean perception of activities of admissions committees in universities and, colleges of education in Cross River State higher education system.
2. What is the mean perception in the appointments of heads of departments in universities and colleges of education in Cross River State higher education system.
3. What is the mean perception of the activities of anti corruption committees in universities and colleges of education in Cross River State higher education system.

Hypotheses

Ho1 There is no significant difference between academics in universities and colleges of education in their mean perception on the activities of admissions committees.

Ho2. There is no significant difference between academic in universities and colleges of education in their perception of appointment and promotion of their colleagues.

Ho3. There is no significant difference between academic in universities and colleges of education in their perception on activities of anti corruption.

Methods of study

A sample of 250 academic staff where were drawn as the sample size from the total population of 800. Lecturers in the three institutions of higher learning in the state through stratified random sampling technique.

The politics of education and social inequalities questionnaire (PESIQ), was validated and pre-tested for reliability and the reliability coefficient of .65 was derived. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the independent t-test analysis was used to test the null hypotheses. The result showed that there is

difference between colleges of education and universities in Cross River State of Nigeria in terms of the activities of admission committees, the politics of appointments of heads of Department and sections of Deans of faculties, the nature of activities of anticorruption committees answer the appointments and promotions of staff. It was recommended that for inequalities to be reduced then the system of should pay down on politics so that meritocracy not be allowed to interfere with official decisions. Everybody should be given his or her own dues amongst others.

Results and discussion of findings

The result of this study is presented here,

Table 1 Mean, standard deviation and t-test of differences between Universities and Colleges of education academics on the activities of admissions committee.

Comparing variables	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
University academics	150	60	12.14	0.04	1.960
Colleges academics	100	58	9.94		

$P < 0.05$ DF 248, Total N = 250

There is no significant difference between Universities and Colleges of education academics on the activities of admissions committee.

The result showed that, there is no significant difference between academic staff in universities and colleges of education in terms of the politics that shrouded admissions. This is because the calculated t-value was less than the critical t. The researcher therefore concludes as such. This finding is in league with the view of (Otieno, 2008) and (Miller, 2003) who observed that admissions committee further in still, in equalities through unnecessary politics and outright sale of admissions for fortune. This scenari gives the universities and colleges of education negative image but cheapen standard and quality. Hence admission in most institution is for the higher bidder. The situation is even worsen with unapproved degreesb coming up in the guides of satisfying the requirements of deregulation. (Ehiametalor 2004).

Table II: there is no significant difference between universities and colleges of education academics interms of the mean perception of appointment of heads of department and Deans o faculty.

Mean, standard deviation and t-test of differences between universities and colleges of education academics interms of the mean perception of appointment of heads of Department and Deans of faculty.

	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
University academics	150	62	12.19	0.07	1.960
Colleges academics	100	9.94			

$P < 0.05$ DF 248, Total N = 250

The statistical test here reveals that appointments and promotion of academic staff in universities and colleges of education in Cross River is to large extent characterized by polices. Lots of academic are skipped even though there is an existing law that headship should rotate amongst certain class of academics. The interest of the heads of institutions often determined who gets what, when and how Lawsell (Okeke 1996). The bottom line in this analysis is that inequalities is entrenched into the appointment and promotion of academic therefore reinforcing inequalities in higher education systems (Otieno 2007) and (Okeke 1996)

It is this scenario that gave birth to the concepts like; the authoritative allocation of values as exposed earlier by Easton and exemplified in the Cross River State Nigerian experience.

There have been cases where academics whose qualifications are still lacking gets their appraisal sent out and others delayed this is an obvious case of social inequality. This finding was in league with the opinion of (Atuaehene 2007) and (Ulrich 2008). Who were bittered about this phenomenon as social differentiation in higher education and articulated in their various presentation that both politics of education and social inequalities are mutually reinforcing mediocrity in higher educational system.

Table III There is no significant difference between the academics in universities and colleges of education in terms of the mean perception of the activities of anticorruption agencies

	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
University academics	150	12.19	0.01	1.960	
Colleges academics	100	60	9.94		

$P < 0.05$ DF 248, Total N = 250

The result in Table 3 showed that there is no significant difference as l:he t-calculated is by far less than the t- critical, on the basis of this scientific postulation the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and conclude as such. The result of this hypothesis is in league with (Odigwe 2008) who maintained that, most heads of institutions have used the anti-

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corruption committee particularly in Cross River State to settle scores of Academics who do not seem to be in their good books of the administration are "framed up" and referred to the committee. This Political thinking holds no good for the system.

CONCLUSION

Generally the politics of education as a scholastic field of study is expected to see how government machinery could be used to bring about positive change in education. Unfortunately, this is not the situation; it is rather reinforcing mediocrity in the system thereby widening the social gap and inequality that for centuries scholars have advocated for close ranks. If politics of education as a field of study is to serve any useful purpose then uninformed scholars must be mindful in the atrocities they commit in its guise. This is unacceptable and relevant agencies should be guided properly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made

1. That there is an urgent need to correct the distortion that characterizes the understanding of politics of education, apply the original meaning of use of the political machinery to improve the educational system and nothing less.
2. Politicization of education should be discouraged by heads of institutions for it means no good for the system.
3. Heads of institutions are by this study urgently requested to give to their staff their due, This will curtail the instance of inequalities in higher education system.
4. The existing laws that govern employment and promotion of staff in higher education should be implemented not minding whose ass is gutted, This will minimize the recurrence of inequalities in higher education system in Cross River State.
5. Heads of institutions should exhibit adequate maturity in handling disciplinary matters particularly as it concerns staff. The use of secondary data as a basis to judge the fate of erring academics should be reconsidered.
6. Heads of institutions should act in areas that they have jurisdiction and carry everybody along despite creed or colour.
7. The universities and colleges of education should be seen as knowledge societies and should therefore live up to this expectation, by shunning acts capable of creating bad blood, inequalities, discrimination and over politicization of the system.

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