

Perceptions on Falling Standard and Decline Inequality of Federal Universities in Northwest Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The importance of education to the development of any nation needs not to be overemphasized, and so, falling standard and decline in quality of Education has become the public outcry. Dough, this problem not only in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigerian but across the six Nigerian geopolitical zones is a relative term. The study adopts descriptive survey design using the students and lecturers of Federal Universities of Northwest Zone as the population of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw Four hundred respondents from the four selected Universities as the Sample used for the Study. A self-made questionnaire entitled "Questionnaire on perceptions on falling standard and decline in quality offederal Universities in Northwest zone, Nigeria" was used to collect data from 400 respondents from the four selected Universities based on Krejcie and Morgan 1970 table of sample size. The research instrument was subjected to scrutiny by research experts in Bayero University Kano and Northwest University, Kano in order to establish its validity. The instrument was subjected to Cronbact's Alpha Reliability test and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.85. The data collected was analyzed using, mean(x), t-test, and ANOVA statistical tools. This study discovered that the Standard of Federal Universities in Northwest Zone of Nigeria has not fallen but the quality is declining gradually. Also, the characteristics, causes, and the economic implications of this decline in Quality of Federal Universities in Northwest Zone Nigeria were discovered. Finally, recommendations were made to improve the quality of Federal University systems not only in Northwest zone but in Nigeria at large.*

Keywords: Northwest Zone of Nigeria, Poor Graduate Performance, Quality Assurance.

1. Introduction

Nigerians are still nostalgic concerning the falling standard and decline in quality of Education. According to Uwameiye (2014), the continuing decline in educational standards in Nigeria especially as shown in public examination and the performance of education outputs that are inadequate for employment has engendered public outcry. Uwameiye (2014) affirms that 98.25% of all those that sat for National Examination Council (NECO) examinations in 2009 could not obtain five subject passes. Ifedili and Ochuba (2009) states that there is falling standard of education in Nigeria and enlisted factors militating against the maintenance of standard of education to include, Inadequate finance for the implementation of the formulated policies, inefficiency and corruption in the management of available fund, appointments and promotions of unqualified teachers based on ethnicity and parochialism while neglecting the qualified ones, inadequate instructional facilities which led to ineffective teaching, moral laxity and general insensitivity towards ethical values. Poor remunerations of teachers have led to stagnation of teachers, and have forced them to take up two or more jobs. Also, high rate of examination malpractice supported by students, parents and teachers can also be held responsible for visible decline in quality of Nigerian education.

The issue of falling standard and decline in quality of education seems to be a generally relative terms often used at both the federal and states to describe the state of their education, especially when commissioning a new project. During or after such programs, opinion are abound as to whether or not the standard of education has fallen or the quality has decline. Indeed the argument is of two sides. One is that the standard has fallen drastically as a result of

factors militating against the school system in terms of funding; political will staffing, environmental factors etc. The other has a contrary view. The argument is that, it is not the standard that has fallen but that product from the school system. That is how the products can be measured in terms of outcome.

Bello (2010) stated that Falling standard of Education is a relative term, because there is no well-defined instrument to measure it with utmost reliability and validity that is why the opinion varies. For instance, Nigerian observer (2008) opines that, the issue of the quality of Education in Nigeria should be critically analyzed before determining whether or not the standard is falling or has fallen or even the quality has declined.

The New International Websters Comprehensive Dictionary (2004) Defined Standard of educational system as a systematic and generally accepted level of teaching and learning in the educational institution geared towards improving knowledge and developing skills. Drike (2003) Sees Standard of Education as to how education contributes to the public health or socio-political and economic development of a nation. Bello (2008) conceptualizes it from how university contributes to knowledge and solving problems besetting mankind. Babalola(2006) focused on the concept of Standard of Education in term of admission of Nigerian universities products for postgraduates in developed countries universities. That is if they performed better in their cause of studies, then the standard will be high and vice-versa. In this regard, Uwameiye (2014) posits that generally, when people talk about the standard of education in Nigeria, they seem to compare what the products of education could do during colonial era to what they can do today. According to Gateway to the Nation in

Uwameiye (2014) a study conducted by University of London which compared the teachers trained by the colonial masters to those trained by indigenous teachers, found that those trained by the colonial masters were better than those trained by indigenous teachers. This can be professionally expressed as the scourge of poor graduate performance (PGP). It was said that the present day Nigerian graduates cannot compete favourably with the colonial era's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) holders. This is a situation in which many Nigerian graduates cannot express themselves in English language, which is the official language of the nation. It was affirmed by Uwameiye (2014) that Gateway to the Nation also used written and spoken English as a yardstick for measuring standard of education.

Also, poor quality of graduates in Nigerian academic and industrial institutions have been one of the criteria for measuring standard of education by many scholars who misinterpreted poor graduate performance and poor academic achievement for falling standard of education in Nigeria. PGP is considered responsible for poor goods and services of the type that Nigerian citizens themselves have been avoiding made in Nigeria commodities, even in the Nigerian markets. Thus, international investors in Nigerian societies detested this attitude of Nigerian consumers about "Made in Nigeria" commodities. So, despite the availability of raw materials in Nigeria, they still have to find their ways to greener pastures like Japan, India, China, United Kingdom, Italy and United State where their commodities would be respected, recognized and patronized for profit maximizations. This among others could be held responsible for the menace of unemployment that has encapsulated the Nigerian economy.

Consequently, employment creation is one of the important focuses of Change Agenda Policy of the present Nigerian administration. As the private companies such as Michelin tyres producing company among others move away from Nigeria, all their Nigerian workers became jobless. There is no doubt that government sector cannot employ all graduates alone without the private organizations' interventions. Observation shows that in the recent years whenever, the remaining private sectors in the Nigerian society embark on employment of workers, they always spend a lot of money on retraining of staff before assigning them responsibilities. This is perhaps a question of Nigerian graduates quality distrust. Some of these international organizations prefer importation of manpower from other nations of the global world to Nigeria. The rate at which Nigerian states were given out their road and bridges contracts to foreign companies is an index of awareness that Nigerian education needs serious attentions. Nigerian engineering industries have started seeing those who study abroad more superior to those that study within the country. Agreeably, to be a Vice Chancellor of a Nigerian University today, one needs to study abroad, perhaps it was believed that nothing good could come from those who study within the four corners of Nigeria in terms of University Administration. This sentiment is not limited to education and engineering institutions and industries respectively but also in the health industries. Nigerian well to do citizens cannot trust Nigerian medical doctors with their lives. Thus, they tend to travel abroad to get themselves treated anytime

they are sick. In this regard, the study seeks to examine the status, potency and the way forward for Nigerian change agenda policy with regards to the popular falling standard of education in comparison with decline in quality of education of federal universities in Nigeria using the northwest geopolitical zone as a case study.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to differentiate between falling standard and decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone, Nigeria. The following objectives were examined:

- 1) To examine the perception of respondents on the falling standard and decline in quality of federal universities of Northwest zone, Nigeria.
- 2) To examine the perceptions of respondents on the causes of decline in quality of education..

Research Questions

The following research question was designed to pilot the study.

- 1) What is the perception of students and teachers on falling standard and decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigeria?
- 2) What are the causes of decline in quality of education in federal universities of northwest zone, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: there is no significant difference on the respondents' level of education and their perception on falling standard and decline in quality of Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigeria.

H₀₂: there is no significant difference across gender on the causes of decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Empirical Studies

Arong and Ogbadu (2010) perhaps considered "Falling Standard of Education in Nigeria (FSEN)" as unprofessional and as a layman term thus they prefer to use Declining Quality of Education in Nigeria (DQEN). The problem of declining quality of education in Nigeria is mainly an administrative one and adequate educational inspection and supervision will produce high quality education, while lack of it will produce declining quality (Arong and Ogbadu, 2010).

Borisade (2013) however discovers that lecturers, students' societal ills, overloaded curriculum were responsible factors and recommends that lecturers welfare, adequate funding, provision of infrastructures, prompt payment of retired staff gratuities and review of overloaded curricula will go a long way at improving the standard of education. Chinelo (2011) posits that when appropriate skills are lacking in any production system, the outcome is poor quality, which undermines capacity building and sustainable development in any nation. Okoroma (2007) emphasizes that "a problem well defined is half solved" so the problem of Nigerian education should be well defined. As an instrument for overall development education must be of good standard. It

is now obvious that declines in Nigerian quality of education are below the levels requiring for a meaningful development. If nothing is done to remedy the situation Nigeria will perpetually remain a developing nation with dependence on foreign countries for the supply of goods and services that required the use of simple technologies. Such a situation will deny many an opportunity for a quality living. Consequently, implementation strategies will have to be redefined so that the flaws in the educational system can be removed (Okoroma 2007). Funding of education must be improved so as to place education where it belongs. Okoroma (2007) concludes that the recommendation of the UNESCO that at least 26% of a nation's budget be allocated to education was based on a careful analysis and is necessary for the achievement and maintenance of acceptable standards. Nigeria must accept and implement the recommendation to savage and upgrade the quality of Nigerian education which is perhaps due to under-funding.

Ojedokun and Aladejana(2012) in their paper on standards responsible for the decline in Quality of Secondary education in Nigeria clarifies issues surrounding the misplacement of standard as against quality when examining the success or failure of secondary education on yearly basis. The paper concludes that the standard of education has not fallen in Nigeria, but that it is the quality of education that is vast declining and all stakeholders in the education have a lot of roles to play to get the quality back on track.

3. Theoretical Clarification

Among other characteristics of Open system such as input, output, dynamic homeostasis, and equifinality is the cycle of event. Cycle of events states that, "If there is continuous inflow of input factors from the environment into the system, there would be continuous outflow of output from the system back into the environment". However, it should be noted that the quality of input factor determines the quality of outputs. This is because it is not possible for any

teacher to give what he/she do not have, brilliant teacher are more likely to produce brilliant graduates. Input factors needed in the school as a cycle of event means raw materials required for the school production process such as qualitative student enrollment, qualified teachers, instructional materials, quality assurance, infrastructural facilities, teachers employment, good teaching method, effective school administrator, effective counseling programs, students motivation and teachers motivation through regular payment of teachers salary.

4. Methodology

The study adopts descriptive survey design using the students and lecturers of Federal Universities of Northwest Zone as the population of the study. There are seven (7) states in the Northwest zone of Nigeria. These states include; Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw Four hundred respondents from the four selected Universities as the Sample used for the Study. A self-made questionnaire entitled "perceptions on falling standard and decline in quality of federal universities in northwest zone, Nigeria" was used to collect data from 400 respondents from the four selected Universities based on Krycie and Morgan 1970 table of sample size. The research instrument was subjected to scrutiny by research experts in Bayero University Kano and Northwest University, Kano in order to establish its validity. The instrument was subjected to Cronbact's Alpha Reliability test and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.85. The data collected was analyzed using, mean(x), t-test, and correlation coefficient(r) statistical tools.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Four from the Seven Federal Universities of Northwest Zone States were used for the study. The Universities used and percentage of respondents in which the questionnaires were administered are presented in the frequency table below.

Table 1: frequency table of sample used from the four Universities: source: Survey, (2016).

Federal Universities of the Northwest Zone States Used					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ahmadu Bello University	100	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Bayero University	100	25.0	25.0	50.0
	Federal University Dutse	100	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Federal University Katsina	100	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

From the table1 above, it is shown that out of four hundred respondents used for the study, 25% of the sample used were drawn from each of the four Universities used for the study.

Table 2: The level of education of the respondents; Sources: Survey, (2016).

Educational Level Distribution of the Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Degree	260	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Masters	104	26.0	26.0	91.0
	PhD	36	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Looking at the table above, one can conclude that out of four hundred respondents used for the study, two hundred and sixty (260) respondents were first degree holders, one hundred and four (104) were master degree holders and thirty six (36) were PhD holders.

Table 3: The sample used based on gender distributions Sources: Survey, (2016).

Gender Distribution of the Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	268	67.0	67.0	67.0
	Female	132	33.0	33.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, one can see that out of four hundred respondents used for the study, two hundred and sixty eight (268) of the respondents used for the study were male while one hundred and thirty two (132) were female. This is further explaining in the bar chart below.

Distribution of respondents according to their Positions in the University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lecturer	120	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Student	280	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4: The sample used based on position of the respondents. Sources: Survey, (2016).

From the table 4 above, it is clear that one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were lecturers while two hundred and eighty (280) were students.

Answering the Research Question

Question One: What is the perception of respondents on falling standard and decline in quality of education in federal universities of northwest zone, Nigeria?

S/N		A	U	D	%A	%D
1.	Teacher-students ratio in Federal Universities as stated in the NPE has not been officially increased by the government.	286	66	48	71.5%	12%
2.	Minimum Lecturers qualifications in Federal Universities has not been reduced from Masters to First degree.	292	44	64	73%	16%
3.	Government has not compromised the role of library in teaching and learning in Federal Universities.	196	70	134	49%	33.5%
4.	Government has not compromised the role of laboratory in the teaching of science in Federal Universities.	204	58	138	51%	34.5%
5.	Government has not compromised the criteria for admission of students into Federal Universities.	232	36	132	58%	33%
Total	Universal percentage				60.5%	25.8%

Source: Field survey (2016).

From the table above, since the universal percentage of those respondents agreed is higher (60.5%) than those with disagreed (25.8%), one could then conclude that the respondents agreed that standard of education in the federal universities has not falling but the quality declined.

Question Two: What is the perception of respondents on the causes of decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest zone Nigeria?

S/N		A	U	D	%A	%D
1.	There is over reliance on theory rather than practical's in Federal Universities of Northwest zone, Nigeria.	344	14	42	86%	10.5%
2.	There is inadequate funding of Federal universities infrastructures.	334	32	34	83.5%	8.5%
3.	There is inadequate employment of qualified lecturers.	296	36	68	74%	17%
4.	There is inadequate training and retraining of lecturers.	322	32	46	80.5%	11.5%
5	There is negative attitude of students and lecturers to study and work respectively.	246	58	96	61.5%	24%
Total	Universal percentage				77.1%	14.3%

Source: field survey, (2016).

From the table above, it could be realized that the respondents confirm the causes of decline in qualities of federal universities of northwest zone to includes the following: Over reliance on theory rather than practical's in Federal Universities of Northwest zone, Nigeria; Inadequate funding of Federal universities infrastructures; Inadequate employment of qualified lecturers; Inadequate training and retraining of lecturers and Negative attitude of students and lecturers to study and work respectively.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference on students and lecturers perceptions on the correct nomenclature given to challenges of Federal Universities of Northwest Zone, Nigeria.

Critical ratio of falling standard of education based on lectures' and students' perceptions

Variable	Residential area	N	Mean	S.D	't' value	Remarks at 5% level of significance
Perceptions	Lecturers	120	74.79	6.876	0.030	NS
	Students	280	74.81	7.291		

Table value 1.945; Source: Field Survey (2016)

Looking at the above table of the critical ratio of falling standard of education based on lecturers and students perceptions, it is quite shown that table value (1.945) is greater than the calculated value (0.030). Hence the null hypothesis is retained. That is, there is no significant difference in students and lecturers perceptions.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference across Gender on the causes of decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone, Nigeria.

Perception of the Respondents' based on Gender.

Variables	N	'r' value		Remarks at 5% level of significance
		Calculated value	Table value	
Perception based on Gender	400	0.104	0.234	NS

Field Survey (2016)

From this above table, one could deduce that the table value (0.234) is greater than the calculated value (0.104). Thus, the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference across Gender on the causes of decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigeria" is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference across gender on the causes of decline in Quality of Federal University in Northwest Zone Nigeria.

4.4 Summary of Major Findings

Based on the data collected and analyzed using the appropriate statistical tools, the following major finding could be deduced;

- 1) Students and Lecturers perceived that Standard of Education in Northwest Zone University has not fallen but there is noticeable decline in Quality of Education in term of poor academic achievement and poor graduate performances.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the nomenclature given to the problems of federal universities of northwest zone of Nigeria.
- 3) The major causes of decline in qualities of Education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone of Nigeria include: Over reliance on theory rather than practical's in Federal Universities of Northwest zone, Nigeria; Inadequate funding of Federal Universities infrastructural Facilities; Inadequate employment of qualified lecturers; Inadequate training and retraining of lecturers; Negative attitude of students and lecturers to study and work respectively.
- 4) There is no significant difference in perception across gender on the causes of decline in quality of federal universities in northwest zone of Nigeria.

4.5 Discussions of the Findings

Contemplating on the statement of Okoroma (2007) that a problem well defined is half solved, so the problem of Nigerian education should be well defined. Examining this, Nigerian observer (2008) opined that, the issue of the quality of Education in Nigeria should be critically analyzed before determining whether or not the standard has fallen or decline. On this Background, It is evident that findings have been made resulting from data generated from the field. Thus, it was discovered that Students and Lecturers perceived that Standard of Education in Northwest Zone Universities has not fallen but there is noticeable decline in Quality of Education in term of poor academic achievement and poor graduate performances. This is in line with Ochuba (2009) who differentiates between standard and quality that, "standard is the input and quality is the output and so, it is a wrong perception and assessment that the standard of education is falling in Nigeria. The finding is contrary to Borisade (2013), who stated that the standard of education has fallen drastically as a result of factors militating against the school system in terms of funding, political will staffing, environmental factors etc. Dough Bello (2010) trying to be neutral by saying that falling standard of Education is a relative term, because there is no well-defined instrument to measure it with utmost reliability and validity.

The major causes of decline in qualities of Education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone of Nigeria include: Over reliance on theory rather than practical's in Federal Universities of Northwest zone, Nigeria. These include but not limited to; Inadequate funding of Federal Universities infrastructural Facilities; Inadequate employment of qualified lecturers; Inadequate training and retraining of lecturers; and Negative attitude of students and lecturers to study and work respectively. According to Arong and Ogbadu (2010), the causes of decline in quality of education include but not limited to; Lack of qualify teachers; Lack of Instructional Materials; Inadequate library facilities; Poor remuneration for teachers; Poor attitudes of students/pupils towards learning; Lack of parental responsibilities; Misplaced priority on education by Government; Corruption or lack of integrity among some education stakeholder/workers.

However, Dantata (2013) attributed reasons for decline in quality of education in Nigeria Universities to incessant strike by University staff, inadequate funding and youth bad attitude to the pursuit of knowledge. By this, there is a correlation between the findings of this study and that of Dantata (2013). Supporting the finding of this study on poor attitude of students and Lecturer to learning and teaching, Babalola (2006) avowed that poor attendance of students at lectures and at other academic programme was too much and the Lecturers don't take Student attendance Serious. Emphasizing on learners' poor attitude to learning, Chinelo (2011) states that another striking reason is students' poor reading culture. She Stated further that today, over 70% of students at any level of our educational ladder do not know how to read, whether for pleasure or for academic purpose. Lamenting on the Lecturers part of the bargain of poor attitude, Akintunde (2011) believed that non-dedication of teacher (Lecturers inclusive) constitutes a major factor of falling standard of education in Nigeria. Similarly, Chinelo (2011) concludes that reasons adduced for the falling standard of education in Nigeria include decline in competence and commitment of teachers.

However, decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest zone Nigeria have many implications. But, this study was interested in the economic implications. This was due to the economic recession that the country was battling with at the inception of this research work. Hence, the study revealed the Economic implications of decline in quality of education in federal universities of Northwest Zone of Nigeria to include: Unemployment; Social insecurity; loss of lives and properties; Reduction in government revenue expected from workers tax; Poor quality of goods and services; and Reduction in personal savings and investments.

5. Conclusions

This study sought to investigate the perception of university community on popular falling standard and decline in quality of education in Federal Universities of Northwest Zone Nigeria. The study shows that the scholars are divided into three groups. The first group agreed that standard of education in Nigeria has fallen, the second group stood neutral by saying both are the same, it only a matter of

nomenclature and that there is no instruments for measuring the concepts with utmost reliability and validity while the third group believes that the problems of Nigerian education is better expressed as the menace of decline in quality of education and not falling standard. The findings on this research supported that standard of education in Federal Universities in Northwest Zone Nigeria has not fallen but the Quality is declining. This is visible in poor academic achievement and poor graduate performance. The characteristics of this include that not all graduates of Federal Universities in Northwest Zone Nigeria can speak English Language fluently and not all of them possess the practical skills needed in the world of work. These reflected negatively in poor goods and services in Nigeria markets. Unemployment and lack of self-reliance among the graduates contributed to economic recession that the nation faces presently. By this, it is believed that if the recommendations of this study is fully implemented Nigeria economic may get back on its feet with time.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to guide the Nigerian Education stakeholders.

- 1) Government should implement the 26% of the national budget to education as recommended by the UNESCO to address the problems of underfunding. Qualified Lecturers should be employed
- 2) Vice chancellors of northwest zone federal universities should involve private organizations in the training and retraining of lecturers and the provision of infrastructural facilities.
- 3) Quality control of federal universities of northwest zone should be the government's top most priority.
- 4) Vice chancellors should make school based laws that will enforce students to speak English language while in the four corners of the university compound.
- 5) Government should provide adequate infrastural facilities, instructional materials and laboratories for federal universities of northwest zone to reduce decline in quality of education.

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