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„Investing in people, by investing in higher education and skills in Africa“



THE CONSTRAINTS OF INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND LOW ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT CAMEROON'S STATE UNIVERSITIES

UNIVERSITY OF MAROUA

Project Presentation

Investment in people in higher education and skills in Cameroon is bedevilled by many socio-economic and political problems :

Demographic growth and poor infrastructure has led to the oversaturation and over-used of the ill-developed and multi-puposed classrooms which rotate between the various faculties. As a result, there are:

High rate of absenteeism either because of lack of economic means to go to the campus to follow lessons or because of lack of space in the classrooms.

Oversimplification of examination papers to enable lecturers meet deadline in the marking of hundreds of scripts and the publication of results.

Lack of microphones in classroom which over-strains the lecturer and penalise the students who hardly hear the lecturer.

Frequent interruptions of lesson because the halls are used for other purposes: conferences, examinations and other curricular activities.

Course outline hardly cover because of lack of teaching space often courses are hurriedly taught in order to end the academic year.

Evaluation of students are not always the best because of few invigilators to invigilate about two hundred students so students cheat during examinations.

The Economic crisis has impaired investment in higher education in the following ways:

Low budget for research has led to poor laboratories equipment which affects the output of the students.

Teaching is more abstract or theoretical than practical. Lecturers for example just tell students how the software runs a programme without using a computer. More often students are not rich enough to go to the laboratory center.

Very little publication on the local environment to enable the adaptability of the students and for them to better appreciate their local research activities.

Poor teaching staff and didactic materials:

There are more assistant lecturers who are more focused on completing their terminal degree than on the courses they teach. Some take two weeks to complete a 60-hour course.

There is also a limited number of qualified lecturer to supervise students. They supervise more than ten master and doctorate students per year. More often supervision is not done by the specialists of the domain: not for expertise but to make money.

Ill-equipped or no existing library that make research very difficult and student have no option but to turn to unscientific sources in the internet.

Very unstable political environment for the past three years have impaired skill development in Cameroon:

Threats from secessionists from the English-speaking part of Cameroon has led to thousands of internally Displaced students to other part of the country.

Tens of schools have been burnt, lecturers have been killed and kidnapped.

Students are caught between respecting orders from separatists and government.

The bicultural nature of the country also impaired skill development in the country. Difficulties of students who find themselves in universities in the French speaking section of the Country in terms of language barrier.



Project Activities

Firstly, we will carry out an in-depth identification of all the problems that affect the investment in higher education and the development of skills in Cameroon by using a pretest. This will be done using documentary research in which we will examine the growth of university in Cameroon in relation to investment and skill development using a longitudinal method. This will enable us to appreciate the problem in order to investigate it.

Secondly, we will carry a profound research in the domain using the students of all the private and state universities of Cameroon. We will first of all pretest our measuring instruments in order that the questions are exhaustive and accurate. Then we will use the sequential explanatory mixed method to carry the research.

Thirdly, we will recruit research assistants mostly university students and lecturers in all the major university centres of the country such as Buea, Douala, Yaounde, Dschang, Bamenda, Ngoundere, Maroua and Bamenda to help administer the questionnaire which will take about two months. The selection of students will be by simple random sampling in which we will use the list of each university. We will number them in the sampling frame and then generate a set of numbers randomly and select the students whose numbers we will be selected. Therefore the subjects will have an equal chance of being selected. The collected data will be administered using software such as SPSS and others.

Fourthly, we will recruit professional statisticians to register the findings in a software and then the data will be analysed. An appropriate understanding of the result will lead us the fifth step of the research which is qualitative and it will be based on certain aspects after an understanding of the quantitative results. Sixthly, we will recruit experts in conducting interview preferably sociologists, anthropologists and psychologist to conduct the interview using a purposive sampling method.

After the analyses of data, we will make an indepth recommendation per problem identified that will help to change policy and behavior that will better help in skill development and investment in higher education.

Finally the result will be published in peer reviewed journals and books and will be presented in conferences and seminars.



Project Results

The higher the demographic growth of students at the universities in Cameroon, the more university infrastructure will deteriorate and the lower will be students' academic achievement and their skills development.

The higher the infrastructural poverty, the higher the the oversaturation of classrooms, the higher the rate of absenteeism because lack of space in the classrooms, the higher the oversimplification of examination papers to enable lecturers meet deadlines, the more lecturers over-strains themselves, the more the difficulties students have in hearing the lecturers, the more lessons are interrupted, the less lecturers cover their syllabus and the more students cheat during examinations.

The lower the investment in research, the poorer laboratories will be equipped and the more abstract or theoretical lessons will become as well as the less researchers will publish on local problems.

The poorer the teaching staff and didactic materials, the more non specialists will supervise students and the more students qualified lecturers will have for supervision as well as the more students will turn to unscientific sources in the internet for research.

The more unstable the political environment in Cameroon, the more there are thousands of internally displaced students in other part of the country, the more tens of schools are burnt, the more lecturers are killed and kidnapped, the more Students are caught between respecting orders from separatists and government.

The more English-speaking students leave to attend university studies at French-speaking region, the more difficulties they face in developing their skills because of language barrier.

Sustainability & Synergies

When the skills of the students in Cameroon are increased, it will lead to greater production in all the sectors and will consequently affect the economic growth of the country as well as social inclusion and environmental durability. This project will produce a change in investment in higher education and skills and the dissemination of results will lead to organizational change and a new policy in higher education in Cameroon. Results will stimulate the construction of more infrastructure, investment in laboratories, etc which will positively affect academic performance and skills.

There will be a research synergy that will be created between the lecturers of the various universities and different faculties in order to better provide better ideas and explore each other ideas and more especially to generate much better solutions.

Information

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Nanche Billa Robert
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Sciences for Development
Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences
University of Maroua
PO 664, Far North Region - Cameroon
Tel1: 237677848241 or 237655790164

E-mail: nanchefile@yahoo.co.uk
nancherobert@yahoo.co.uk

Social Media: https://web.facebook.com/?ref=tn_tnmn



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