

Investigating the Rudiments of *Access Must Rise and Fees Must Fall* in the Tertiary Institutions of Learning in Selected African Countries

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ABSTRACT Education plays a major role in the socio-economic growth and development of a nation. The rights of students in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa should not be handled with levity. The objective of this paper was to examine the causes of *access must rise and fees must fall* in South African tertiary institutions of learning. This paper used a literature review methodology and presented the following investigative findings pertaining to the causes of *access must rise and fees must fall* in South African tertiary institutions of learning and made recommendations to the government pertaining to various actions that should be taken to protect the rights of students by ensuring that they all have equal access to infrastructural facilities and obtain financial support to study in any university of their choice. The findings from this study revealed that the majority of the students are affected by the poor social infrastructural facilities and lack of financial support as well as the increase in the tuition fees raised by the government. The review confirmed that the majority of the students in higher institution of learning will be adversely affected by these challenges because they come from poor families and they cannot continue to study in environments that are not conducive. The paper also identified the need for preventing all these quandaries and predicaments in the higher institutions of learning in South Africa by providing an insight into further research regarding the institutional weaknesses and policy issues. The paper made the following recommendations: the government should collaborate with other governmental organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as other private groups to alert and educate them on the need to support her in order to enable her effectively finance and provide conducive and enabling learning and living conditions for the students in various tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone to the rapid socio-economic growth and development of all nations in the African continent. Therefore, it is pertinent to look into some of the controversial issues or stumbling blocks hindering the successful running of educational system in African countries, especially South Africa. The epilepsies confronting the educational system in South Africa could be attributed to impromptu implementation of the decisions made by the

government (Williamson 2000; Kanjee and Sayed 2013). This is a major catastrophe in the educational sector in South Africa as it has not been adequately addressed by the majority of the populace in the country. The populace does not know who should be blamed- the President or the policymakers. Importantly, fluctuation in the educational system in South Africa has not been effectively addressed by the government. Most of the students in the tertiary institutions are suffering because of inadequate facilities for teaching and learning in addition to overcrowded, overstretched and substandard facilities (Ebehikhalu and Dawam 2016). The system is also bedevilled with lack of finance, irregular supply of electricity, poor infrastructural facilities such as library, accommodations, corruption and embezzlement of funds, lack of healthcare and porous security (Monday et al. 2013; Meng and

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Friday 2014; Agueh 2015; Dulle 2015; Christiana 2016). In addition, poor sanitation and so forth are also some of the notable impediments facing the students. Sadly, the majority of these students come from poor family background with parents living in rural areas (Stromquist et al. 2013). It is a general phenomenon that if there is no educational system that can build a nation, there will be no place to search for adequate knowledge or wisdom to build up that nation. Building a good foundation for all students is synonymous with building a nation. Once the educational system of a country collapses, the nation itself collapses. This means that educational sustainability should be embraced in the country through quality and amicable government policy that will appreciate and welcome all the stakeholders such as tertiary institutions' managements, students' Representative Council (SRC), private organizations and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). The policy should not traumatize stakeholders.

South Africa, as one of the best African countries where democratic system of government is best practiced (Diamond 2015), is well known for listening to the voice of the people – youths, young and old are strictly heard and considered as important. In fact, many brilliant and great promises such as free access to basic infrastructural facilities, free education for all and creation of more employment opportunities made by the government and various municipalities in South Africa during electioneering campaigns (Twala 2012) gave a lot of students and parents hope and confidence that once they are voted into the offices, they would do as they had promised. It is very sad to say that most of all these promises have not been adequately fulfilled. Although the government is trying to ensure that all these promises are fulfilled, there are some other sectors in the economy that need attention. If the government and her policymakers can understand the students' financial status and background and engage them in constructive dialogue, in collaboration with various tertiary institutions' managements and other important stakeholders in the educational system in South Africa, the mishap and calamity associated with *access must rise and fees must fall* campaign by students in South African tertiary institutions will be effectively addressed and amicably solved.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the causes of *access must rise and fees must fall* in South African tertiary institutions.

Research Question

- What are the causes of *access must rise and fees must fall* in South African tertiary institutions?

Problem Statement

Despite the fact that several positive efforts have been made by South African government to curb the current mishap and cataclysm occurring in the tertiary institutions of learning, yet, the problems of *access must rise and fees must fall* still continue unabated and causing rifts between the students in the higher institutions of learning and government. This is often seen from several students' protests and demonstrations. The majority of the students in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa posited that corruption and embezzlement of funds within the system, lack of finance, poor infrastructural facilities such as accommodations, sanitations, interrupted power/electricity supply, insecurities, inadequate health care and so forth are the major causes of *access must rise and fees must fall* in their various institution of learning across the nation. Sadly, the majority of these students come from poor family background with parents living in the rural areas. Therefore, there is a need for the government and policymakers to urgently look into the students predicaments' and come out with effective and lasting solutions to address the ugly scenarios in order to ensure smooth academic pursuit in the higher institutions of learning in South Africa.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a systematic review of literature from journals, books, conference reports, dissertations and internet sources. The researcher's intuitive experience and knowledge in Public Administration, Government, United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) publications to raise debates and discourses on issues concerning *access must rise and fees must fall* in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa were also used.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Genesis of Access Must Rise and Fees Must Fall in the Higher Institutions of Learning in South Africa

The majority of students in the higher institutions of learning in South Africa are adversely confronted with many problems. These problems however, led to students' poor academic performance (Potgieter et al. 2015). It is pertinent at this juncture to state that students' agitation is not against the quality of academic staff but against poor infrastructural facilities and increased/exorbitant tuition fees. Another factor that exacerbates this pandemonium is that students want to exercise some of their fundamental human rights which include the right to education and freedom of speech (Alderson 1999). Despite the fact that the country is operating a democratic system of government and it is also believed by them that if truly they are part of the government and not totally excluded or isolated from participating in government activities in the country, then, the government must listen to their grievances and take urgent measures to avert violence and disruption of academic activities in the tertiary institutions of learning in the country. This and other students impediments within the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa are some of controversial issues that led to *access must rise and fees must fall* in the various tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa.

Apparent Causes of Access Must Rise in the Higher Institutions of Learning in South Africa

Apparently, poor infrastructural facilities discussed below are some the apparent allegations that students levy against the government. Despite the fact that students pay huge amount of money as tuitions, the infrastructural facilities put in place do not commensurate with the amount paid. In fact, this gave birth to this emphatic term "*access must rise*" in the higher institutions of learning in South Africa.

Poor Accommodation

Observably, several students from various campuses across the nation complain that most of the tertiary institutions have poor accom-

modation facilities. In fact, this is synonymous with the study conducted by Agueh (2015) who also emphasised that poor lodging families is one the most important challenges facing students in the tertiary institution of learning. This makes most of them to secure better places to stay outside their institutions. Most of the accommodations provided by various institutions' managements across the nation are grossly inadequate. As a result, most of the students who are stranded, squat from one place to another throughout the period of their academic careers in their various institutions. Even those who secure accommodations often complain that their rooms are too small. In some cases, two students are allocated to a single small room which is expected, under normal condition, to be allocated to a person. This is one of the reasons why various students raise their voices aloud and call for increase and better access to accommodation in their institutions.

Sanitation

Despite the fact that most of the institutions across receive huge amount of money from both the students and the government in this country to make lives better for the students, make them live in conducive environments, both within and outside the institutions, yet, much improvements have not taken place in area of sanitation. Some institutions' environments are very clumsy, awkward, untidy, embarrassing and uncomfortable for the students and members of staff. This is a dangerous threat to their health. Noticeably, there are some stagnant waters which can cause hazard to the students and members of staff living on those campuses. This is another important reason why students agitate that various institutions' managements and government should look into and increase access to tertiary education. Students' demand at this juncture is that the government and other various institutions' managements should make more efforts to create conducive atmosphere that will make lives better for both students and members of staff living within and outside the tertiary institutions premises.

Interrupted Power Electricity/Supply

This is another serious national problem confronting several organisations' potential appli-

cations and speed of internet services, as well as the students in the tertiary institutions of learning in the developing countries (Dlodlo 2013; Dulle 2015) in which South Africa is not excluded. This was assumed to be a problem that could not be amicably solved by the tertiary institutions' managements except by the government and this is why the author of this paper called it 'national problem. Of course, it is a national problem because almost all the provinces in South Africa experienced total power outage and this led to load shedding in the country. The major implication/effect of this load shedding on the students is that it drastically slows down the rate of work performance and schedule of lectures to be delivered by the lecturers to the students at a specific period. A job/assignment expected to be done or submitted to a specific location in the institutions might be delayed. The government is expected to intervene in order to improve and increase electricity supply to various institutions of learning in South Africa.

Securities

According to Monday et al. (2013), there are no adequate securities and safety in most of the tertiary institutions of learning. Some security services delivered by those institutions are very poor. In fact, the services rendered for the protection of students or providing safety for students on campuses are not effectively felt by students. Students' safety and protection should be one of the paramount concerns of government and various tertiary institutions' managements. The government and managements of various tertiary institutions should try as much as possible to provide adequate securities so that the students and their properties can be secured in order to repose confidence in government and school authorities.

Healthcare

As regards the infrastructural facility such as healthcare, many students are not satisfied with the service delivery in some tertiary institutions as some clinics are short of manpower (such as medical practitioners). Observably and realistically, it is not that there are no healthcare or medical care facilities in most of the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa but the fact remains that they are not adequate. They

are relatively inadequate to cater for a large number of students admitted into the institutions. This has also contributed to poor service delivery to the students. There should be at least two to three medical doctors to work and supported by nurses employed in the clinics located in various tertiary institutions across the nation. It has also been observed that in some of the tertiary institutions of learning, there are no ambulances and medical doctors to attend to some emergency cases. This is an eyesore. Health care delivery should not be taken with levity but with sanctity. This is another important reason why all the students in the tertiary institutions of learning across South Africa agitated for access to good medical care or healthcare delivery in their campaign in 2015 and partly early January in 2016. In fact, agitation for better healthcare delivery was rampant in their campaign in all tertiary institutions.

Internet Services

Poor internet facility was also perceived as another major cause of *access must rise* struggle in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa. Irregular, fluctuating and epileptic internet service delivery in various tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa has undoubtedly contributed to slow rate of work expected to be done on time. Although, most of the institutions' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centres, on rare occasions, notify internet users about when internet services will be available or not, most often they usually fail to reveal the specific time to the internet users on campuses. There is the need for increased and improved access to internet facility in tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa.

Apparent Causes of Fees Must Fall in the Higher Institutions of Learning in South Africa

Lack of Finance

Reasonably and convincingly, lack of finance was well perceived as one of the noticeable causes of *fees must fall* among the students in the higher institutions of learning in South Africa. The inability of the majority of the students to pay their accumulated/outstanding tuitions and accommodation bills, undoubtedly and undeni-

ably led to students' demonstrations and protests. The majority of the students also emphasise that they are from poor family backgrounds particularly rural areas where some of their parents are peasant farmers with little or no money. Some of them also stress that the majority of their parents merely survive through the stipends received in form of old age grants and child grants. Sadly, the fact remained that these students are of the opinion that there is no place they could go to raise these exorbitant accumulated outstanding bills. Therefore, they are emphasizing that the government should intervene urgently and rescue them from the immense catastrophe confronting them on their various campuses across the nation.

CONCLUSION

The slogan, *access must rise and fees must fall* has been critically and elaborately debated and argued and from the observations and discussions as well other sections of this paper, it is very important to state vividly and vibrantly that the findings analysed and discussed show that the majority of these students in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa are confronted with many impediments such as lack of infrastructural facilities and finance which have invariably caused them to embark on serious and vigorous protests and demonstrations across the nation. These observable facts analysed and critically examined in paper have therefore, showed that *access must rise and fees must fall* campaign prosecuted by the students are the weapon that students can use to get government's attentions or interventions to meet their yearnings. Unquestionably, education plays a vital role in the countries' socio-economic growth and development and as result, the basic needs of all students should be considered as one of important priorities that the government must pay attention to in order to avoid subsequent future occurrence of protests and demonstrations. Some of the observable facts from this paper also show that despite the fact that education plays a major role in building the nation, the rights of students in the tertiary institutions of learning in South Africa should not be handled with levity or taken for granted. They are the leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, their requests and opinions should be heard and

considered as strong weapons that can move the nation forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All governmental organisations and NGOs as well as private organisations should be participants and partakers in the government policies at ensuring support for the government by shouldering the responsibilities of awarding scholarships and bursaries to students in the tertiary institutions in South Africa every year. Multinational companies and philanthropies should come to the aid of indigent students by providing funds and educationally relief materials to lessen their burdens.

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