

ALL-AFRICA STUDENTS UNION, AASU



The African students' perspective on access, retention and diversity

Access to Success: Fostering trust and exchange between Europe and Africa

Workshop: Access and retention: Sharing best practice between Europe and Africa

17-20 November 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

About AASU

1. AASU was formed in the Ghanaian University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, in 1972 to serve as the commanding height of all student movements in Africa.
2. AASU headquarters in Accra, Ghana is reputed as a major hub for meaningful interventions in Africa's public life in the search for development and growth in the continent.
3. AASU has 54 member unions within its fold with whom the organisation enjoys very active relations.
4. AASU has an accredited status with the UN Economic and social Council (ECOSOC) as well as an active relationship with UN Agencies such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, and UNCCD. In march 2000, the United Nations gave AASU a certificate of merit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
5. AASU has sustained Diplomatic Status with the Government of Ghana as well as an established presence in the United States.

Introduction

1. The right to education is guaranteed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (Article 26).
2. People from a disadvantaged social background, cultural minorities, the physically disabled, women and refugees are facing various obstacles, leading to lower representation in higher education across the continent.
3. The processes of globalisation and convergence of the educational system from a national welfare service to an international economy driven market has become a major barrier hindering the principle of equity in access to higher education.
4. The situation is almost the same all over Africa except for few countries like Libya, Egypt and, to some extent, in South Africa.

Retention

1. Many students feel that the ambition of most African governments is to commercialise higher education entirely.
2. Students at the private institutions pay no less than 5000 USD per session, though most families live below poverty lines, as suggested in UNDP statistics.
3. The introduction of disproportionate tuition and other fees in the institutions of higher learning are a major threat to Access and Success.
4. The problems are many and varied: Classrooms are inadequate, hostels are overcrowded with no facilities of comfort, with students (the future leadership of the continent) sometimes sleeping in classrooms, kitchens and any other available space as if destitute. Libraries lack books,

Introduction

1. Resource restrictions that have influenced fees have also caused closure of departments, and the introduction of market rates for student's accommodation, medical and recreational facilities among others.
2. The problems are many and varied: Classrooms are inadequate, hostels are overcrowded with no facilities of comfort, with students (the future leadership of the continent) sometimes sleeping in classrooms, kitchens and any other available space as if destitute.
3. Libraries lack books, laboratories and work-shops are ill-equipped, academic and non academic staff are in short supply and poorly remunerated with the burden of regular strikes and closure while qualified manpower is drained overseas.

Introduction

1. All over the world the funding for higher education is decreasing, affecting both the accessibility and the quality of higher education.
2. We have established the fact that there is a direct correlation between Access and funding.
3. Therefore, we, the students, ask for a social security system that takes into account students needs for housing, food, medical care, study material and transportation
4. Africa is one region which does not have a fair policy on student financial assistance. We also suggest better curricula reform in order to allow students to work and study at the same time.

Access

1. It was evident that access to education is grossly inadequate in Africa, and Nigeria is a clear case.
2. There are is a very wide gap between the educated and the wider population . (No official data)
3. In the surveys conducted among our member unions and selected Universities. About 75% of the respondents in the surveys conducted admitted that the inequitable access to higher education poses a great threat to the educational system in Nigeria
4. We noted the sharp downturn of student enrolment year on year. The outcome revealed that policies have not been crafted to address the needs of the underprivileged and other minorities in society, hence, this unfortunate trend.

Retention

1. We have come to realise that not only access but the success of education is important in higher education. The ability of many students enrolled in higher education to undergo all necessary training successfully without interruption and barriers in terms of finance and other problem is a key issue to our national development.
2. Every year in Africa about 30% of students who apply for admission into institutions of higher learning have access to it and about 5% or more of the students drop out depending on the country in Africa. In fact, based on our research and information from the survey sample, the retention rate in Southern Africa is higher than central Africa, East Africa and West Africa.

Retention

1. Public institutions in Africa admit more than 70% of students who have access to higher education. They were initially wholly financed by Government until the World Bank and IMF advised African Heads of States to shift some of the cost to parents and students.
2. This phenomenon has been one of the major reasons why students drop out in most African public universities.
3. There are no measures in place by Government to enable parents and student to conveniently pay this fee by introducing monthly payment or provision of loans, grants or financial aids to finance their education. Most parents in Africa live below the poverty line and survive with less than \$1 dollar per day

Retention

1. While we may agree that education is expensive it is also an irony for a public university to charge what seems to be exorbitant fee when their parents are not paid enough to enable them to cater for the tuition of their children.
2. These are real issues that negatively affect the issue of “Success” in Higher Education in Africa.
3. Most students opt for private universities which are very expensive. Our research shows that most students that enrolled in private universities could not complete their studies as a result of the high tuition and maintenance costs.
4. Some of them could find the money at the beginning of the programme but then to continue paying for a further three years becomes problematic.

Retention

1. Political instability is another factor that has caused a low retention rate in African institutions. Besides the destruction and deterioration of infrastructures and lives, conflicts are disruptive to studies, sometimes freezing whole generations of students and affecting academic calendars. 95
2. A typical example is the recent incident in Zimbabwe where the eruption of violence during the election saw the closure of institutions of higher learning and the dismantling of the student's organisation (ZINASU).
3. Further, the manipulation of politicians to victimise student's leaders who criticise their government has been of great concern.

Retention

1. Hooliganism in institutions of higher learning in Africa is also one major area that brings about low retention.
2. The tensions and threats that characterise this hooliganism remains one of the foremost reasons why some students drop out of school.
3. In Nigeria, for instance, cults or secret groups on campuses, at times politically linked, commit all sorts of heinous crimes and atrocities with impunity against their fellow students and members of academic communities.
4. This has led to many students dropping out of school as a result of fear of losing their life in the course of their studies while some choose to move to private universities that they cannot afford.

Conclusion

1. In our opinion, there is a direct correlation between poverty and student retention all over Africa. The analysis of our research shows that many students drop out as a result of financial barriers.
2. We have a higher number of students from lower economic backgrounds dropping out from higher education after gaining access.
3. There is lack of equity in the access and student retention in higher education based on the gap between the less disadvantaged and students with good family background.

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Conclusion

1. The solution to these problems is in the hands of our education policy makers.
2. They are expected to create a conducive environment for students to have access to higher education and complete their programmes.
3. Such measures could be to introduce support schemes to enable students to pay for their tuition and education.
4. We still maintain our principal position that education must be free, but governments can adopt a similar system to the one in the United States where students have access to loans, financial aid and grants to finance their education

Introduction



Slogan

**Education is food
Don't Starve the Nation!**

Education is a Right, Not a Privilege!!

Education is Light!!!

An Educated Mind is Liberated Soul!!!!

Thank you!

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