

PRIORITISING LECTURERS' WELFARE IN NIGERIAN PRESENT GOVERNMENT RENEWED HOPE AGENDA AND EFFECTIVE GRADUATES' SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

This study determined the predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda; relationship which exists between lecturers' welfare, and effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy; answered two research questions and tested a null hypothesis. The descriptive survey research designed was adopted and the study was carried out in Nigeria. The population which consisted lecturers and students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training numbered 600, where the multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 150 respondents. A researcher-made questionnaire tagged, "Lecturers' welfare in Nigeria's Government's renewed hope agenda and effective graduates' skill development questionnaire (LWNPBATRHGSD) rated in a 4-point scale duly validated and reliability-tested with a coefficient of .73 generated data for the study. Data was analysed using Linear Regression Analysis. Findings are that: Prioritizing lecturers' welfare in the present Nigeria's renewed hope agenda has a positively high predictive ability on graduates' skill development for a sustainable global economy; lecturers' welfare has a positively high and significant relationship with effective graduates' skill development for a sustainable global economy. Based on the findings made in this study, it is concluded that university lecturers' welfare in Federal universities in Nigeria needs the prioritizing decision of the president. It is equally concluded that effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy can only be achieved through effective training and achievable with enhanced welfare of lecturers. Based on the conclusion drawn, it is recommended that: President Bola Ahmed Tinubu should as a matter of priority and urgency address the lingering welfare issues of lecturers in Nigeria Federal universities; and both Federal Government, the proprietor of Federal universities and employer of lecturers and lecturers themselves under the auspices of ASUU in conjunction with university management should develop lasting solution to lecturers' welfare to allow for smooth academic calendar and graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy.

Keywords: Skill, skill development, graduates, TVET, university, university lecturers, prioritising welfare, global economy, training

Introduction

Graduates' training and skill development have remained critical issues in the agenda for development of Nigeria, and of course, nations globally. Meanwhile, possession of skills largely depends on the level of training given to graduates. Again, graduates' training and skill development could be seen as largely dependent on lecturers' commitment. Lecturers provide the needed training guides and facilitate the acquisition of skills. It is very pertinent, therefore, for a nation that yearns for skilled graduates to consider the welfare of lecturers as top-priority in her agenda. However, Nigeria's antecedents about a decade after independence reveals that education hardly assumes top priority in the economic agenda and policies of government. The implication of lack of priority and focus on education has adversely affected the development of education as evidenced in the skill gap or skill mismatch among graduates from Nigeria's educational institutions, including those of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(TVET). Research evidence to date reveals skill gap and/or skill mismatch among TVET graduates (Caleb and Deebom, 2022; Okon, 2022). Can a nation that refuses to pay attention to her educational system, prioritise lecturers' welfare expect effective graduates' training and skill development?

Importantly, TVET at the university level is critical to the development of national, regional and global economy. Thus, Okon and Usoro (2014) observed a fresh awareness and strong realisation among African countries of the critical role TVET can play in national and regional development. This is because university's and TVET's mandate primarily aim to achieve the development of functional and entrepreneurial skills in those who enrol for it, conduct research for improvement in contents' delivery and influence community and societal development. Both the university and TVET's mandate are in agreement. Therefore, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014: 41, 42) succinctly states:

University education shall make optimum contribution to national development by intensifying its programmes for the development of a high level manpower within the contexts of the needs of the nation, making professional course contents reflect our national requirements,... making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities,... A sizeable proportion of expenditure on university education shall be devoted to Science and Technology.

Similarly, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014: 24) states inter alia:

The goals of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) shall be to provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business, particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels, provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development, and give training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self-reliance economically.

University education, and of course, TVET promotes entrepreneurship. This aligns with the views of Mfam and Anagbogu (2023) that the growing importance of entrepreneurship is largely due to its impact on innovation, economic growth, poverty alleviation and public goods delivery, particularly in developing countries. Mfam and Anagbogu further explained that the adoption of institutional theory in entrepreneurship studies has equally helped to highlight the interactive roles of government and non-government institutions and individuals in entrepreneurship development. A study conducted by Okon (2021) that determined the extent Blogs and Social Networking services influence TVET delivery in the wake of pandemic in selected universities in Africa found that Blogs and Social Networking are significant to a high extent on TVET delivery in the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic.

Observably, Nigeria's model for education funding is heavily in the hands of government. The burden of funding education is heavy on the part of government as proprietor of schools than private individuals in terms of ownership. It is arguably, however that whether public or private ownership of schools, people enrol for private benefits, hence pay some school charges, thereby jointly sharing cost of providing education. Significantly, the inputs/cost of education determine the outputs (benefit) accruing to both individuals who attend school and the society. In the views of Ibiam (2021), the financing of education in Nigeria is a joint responsibility of the Federal, State and Local Government Councils. Ibiam further noted: "The fact that the provision of educational services is very expensive the participation of other agents have been encouraged to ensure adequate funding. For instance, Okon (2015) posited that a series of efficiency and effectiveness mechanisms business education need to be in place for measuring current inputs and outputs to determine the worth and contribution of business

education to national development. A study by Okon (2015) and Okon (2019) determined “The influence of return on investment in business education on undergraduate skills development in federal universities in Nigeria” using survey design with a population of 2080 on which a sample size of 460 respondents found that return on investment in business education office accommodation, classroom space, physical facilities, equipment and library facilities significantly influence undergraduates’ skill development.

Past governments in Nigeria seem to have failed in governance for paying little attention to education generally and consistently failing in enhancing the welfare of lecturers. Consequently, there have been long-drawn industrial disputes between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and university-based unions, especially the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). This has resulted in recurring strikes embarked by ASUU that has interrupted the academic system as hardly an academic session in the last few decades with lecturers embarking on strikes that may last for a period good enough to complete an academic session in some cases.

Interestingly, the present government of President Tinubu has outline areas of interest for development and christens his policy initiatives as renewed hope, thus promising Nigerians of better governance aimed at achieving the renewed hope agenda. Many Nigerians seem not to be relying on this hope due to experience of the immediate past government of President Muhamadu Buhari. The case of academic staff of Nigerian federal universities is still fresh with unpaid salaries of seven months and seventeen days. It is therefore hard for such category of Nigerians to easily believe in the promise of the present administration. Highlight of President Tinubu’s ‘Renewed Hope’ Agenda shows that governance within the four-year term of office, spanning between 29th May, 2023 and 29th May, 2027 will focus on eight key areas, namely: Food security; poverty eradication; economic growth; job creation; access to capital; improving security of life and property; rule of law; and fight against corruption.

A reflection in the immediate past administration indicates that this agenda is not a distance from the agenda of immediate past administration, where the Economic Recovery Development Plan (2017 – 2020) with key areas – constituting the Plan; paved way for Nigeria’s National Development Plan (2021 – 2025) with – equally constituting the Plan. According to Ahmed (2021), ERGP, which ended in December 2020, was designed to assist the country to exit economic recession in 2017 and sustain modest growth until the recent global economic challenges occasioned by COVID-19 Pandemic. The medium-term Development Plan according to Ahmed aims to help Nigeria achieve robust development in the Science and Technology sectors.

A close perusal of President Muhamadu Buhari’s speech revealed that he adopted the method of identifying certain problems that had beclouded the nation. Here him: “At home we face enormous challenges - insecurity, pervasive corruption, the hitherto unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages are immediate concerns” (Buhari, 2015). Buhari further noted: “Unemployment, notably youth un-employment features strongly we intend to attack the problem frontally through revival of agriculture, solid mineral mining as well as credits to small and medium-size businesses to kick-start this enterprises we shall quickly examine the best way to revive major industries and accelerate the revival and development of our railways, roads and general infrastructure”. The President in his second term in office outlines nine key areas. Here him: “Building a thriving and sustainable economy; enhance social inclusion and reduce poverty; enlarge agricultural output for food security and export, attain energy sufficiency in power and petroleum products and expand transport and other infrastructural development; expand business growth, entrepreneurship and industrialisation; expand access to quality education, affordable healthcare and productivity of Nigerians; build a system to fight corruption, improve governance and create social cohesion; and improve security for all” (Buhari, 2020).

The question of prioritizing education, especially welfare of lecturers by the present administration led by President Tinubu can be deciphered in two dimensions - evolving with the manifesto delivered during campaigns as well as the realities on assumption of office. First, preparatory to election many campaign promises actually touched the education sector in terms of creating opportunities for Nigerian children and youth of school age but little emphasis on how the lingering welfare issues of lecturers would be resolved. Nevertheless, attempts are made by different groups to solve problems facing education sector generally. For instance, within September 2023, the House of Representatives debated on targeting enrolment of 14 million out-of-school children. Interestingly, a year ago (possibly during the line-up of campaigns preparatory to 2023 general election, the leader of National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) declared that Tinubu's Education Policy has won students' votes, citing his achievements in education, particularly students' welfare issues as a governor of Lagos State between 1999 and 2007 (Ogunje, 2022). Similar report was made by Young (2022), noting that "one of Tinubu's most inviting policy in his manifesto is the provision for Nigerian students who cannot afford tuition fee to borrow from TETFUND to pay his or her school fees and payback when employed.

Unarguably, President Tinubu would have inherited the lingering welfare issues as they concern university lecturers. Indirectly, however, he has been a critical decider and an 'influencer' in President Muhamadu Buhari-led administration between 2015 and 2023, and of course, a Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) from its conceptive and formative stage till date. Sequel to this, the manifesto of the ruling party (APC) is to a large extent his brain-child. Recall that preparatory to taking power from the hitherto and defunct ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), one of the major campaign weapon of the APC as Nigeria's number one opposition party preparatory to 2015 general election was that the then President Goodluck Jonathan – PDP – led Federal Government should pay attend to the demands of the striking lecturers, arguing that Federal Government has the financial muzzle to improve the welfare of lecturers in the interest of students under the academic care of these lecturers. Although, the economic realities of that administration (before 2015) and the post PDP-led administration differ in terms of availability of funds, the decision to prioritise education and of course, lecturers' welfare is entirely a different policy. Since assuming office, the issue of lecturers welfare continues to resonate in the submissions of many professionals urging Mr. president to show commitment in the welfare of lecturers and possible end the lingering issues arising from the strikes embarked upon by lecturers in year 2022 that resulted to almost eight months salary of lecturers being withheld. For instance, Agboluaje (2023) "has urged Federal Government to show greater commitment to education by increasing the budgetary allocation to the sector and equally "prioritise the welfare of lecturers and payment of the eight-month outstanding salaries of the Academic Staff Union of Universities".

It is important to note that it is only when learning/training has taken place that skills can be acquired by learners and instructors/teachers/lecturers are facilitators of learning as well as skills development. Nnachi (2021) noted that an individual may learn by being taught. The welfare of teachers/lecturers who guide and facilitate learning and training in the school system should be of utmost significance to employers of these teachers/lecturers. A study conducted by Ombugus and Agu (2018) with focus on policy initiatives for encouraging community leaders, industrialists and businessmen to participate in financing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for sustainable development using 90 community leaders, 99 industrialists and 165 businessmen, having found no significant difference in the mean response of respondents regarding how TVET is financed recommended that the finding be utilised by government in the formulation of policies in financing TVET. Finding arising from the study of Ombugus and Agu is not a surprise. Proprietors of schools, both public and private ownership tend to show less interest on the welfare of teachers/lecturers. The imagination on what the situation would be to ordinary persons who have nothing to do with school ownership cannot be

far-fetched. Igwe (2023) had earlier posited that the effectiveness of any university system is directly linked to quality and quantity of the academics remuneration.

Another key area in the welfare scheme of lecturers that government has to prioritise is staff development and research sponsorship. Global goals outline for global development require the implementation of action plans. The implementation needs change agents at all levels of education. Lecturers should be trained on the implementation plans and assigned to use that as part of community service by serving as resource persons and monitoring the implementation of the global goals at all levels of education and other walks of lives in addition to the need to acquire most contemporary pedagogical approaches and management of instructions. Axare (2019) maintained that teachers need to be constantly updated in the latest best practices in the methods and techniques of teaching as well as in their classroom management skills. Adequate funding is needed specifically to avail lecturers with the resources to execute researches with a view to proffering solutions to critical and phenomenal problems of the society. Unfortunately these basic demands of lecturers are far from reality. Consequently, lecturers in federal universities under the auspices of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), who have been in long-drawn industrial disputes with Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), proprietors of federal universities have consistently addressed the concern of welfare issues, describing it as the totality of university development for efficiency in the production of graduates. Meanwhile, the struggle has often been misconstrued by government and most members of the public as greediness on the part of ASUU, whom they believe are demanding so much. It is important to state categorically clear that welfare issues of lecturers in Nigerian universities can effectively be addressed with contemporary funding architecture. Aja-Okorie and Chukwu (2023) acknowledged that higher education is one of the pre-requisites for national development and transformation, noting that sustainable funding is one of the veritable strategies for universities to constantly maintain their status of providing societal needs, yet underfunding has continuously remained one of the greatest challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. Reports by authors further revealed that increase in enrolment has not been proportional to increase in funding; poor funding; staffing development and welfare (Aja-Okorie & Chukwu, 2023; Imeh & Ogar, 2023; Okafor, 2023).

In effect, inclusion of certain items for the improvement of the education sector, policy initiatives, pronouncements of the immediate past and current administrations are unclear in terms of lecturers welfare, and of course not necessarily a reflection of practical implementation. It has equally been observed that Federal Government adopts quite a litany of antics, especially delays in implementing what they even feel, grossly inadequate compared to lecturers demands, or at least what is practicable elsewhere. For instance, the last administration (2015 – 2023) announced the award of 25 and 35 percent pay rise for lecturers without implementation. However, as a measure to avert proposed strike by the Nigeria Labour Congress, the media is already flooded with release of this same package earlier declared without implementation by the last administration. Unfortunately, ASUU neither ASUU nor university management has been communicated on this. In the circumstances that characterised immediate past administration with inconsistency in addressing welfare issues of lecturers (with lecturers unable to attend to research and other professional and personal commitments due to poor welfare packages for lecturers), graduates' training and development of skills for sustainable global economy is hardly realisable. The worrisome situation in TVET cannot be overemphasised as the characteristics highlighted above can hardly allow for reasonable achievement in graduates' training. It is therefore necessary to carry out a predictive study to find out the opinion of lecturers on the promises already outlined in the current administration through the renewed hope agenda. Precisely, in the university setting, the worst hit of poor welfare for lecturers are the lecturers themselves and students as such ugly situation discourages lecturers and hinders effective facilitation with students' ability to develop skills being threatened.

Objectives of the study

1. Determined the predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy
2. Determined the relationship which exists between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy

Research questions

1. What is the predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy?
2. What nature of relationship exists between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy?

Statement of hypothesis

Lecturers' welfare has no significant relationship with effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy

Research methods

This study adopted the descriptive survey research designed, which as anticipated availed the researcher the opportunity of generating data through questionnaire administration on respondents based on their independent opinion. The study was carried out in Nigeria using Federal Universities hosting TVET programmes with a population of 600, comprising 350 academic staff and 250 students undergoing graduate programmes. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted thus, enabled the researcher combine sampling techniques such as simple, systematic, purposive and accidental sampling techniques as applicable. Sequel to the above, contacts were made using available records to reach out to respondents and a sample of 150 respondents made up of 100 lecturers and 50 students was used in the study. A researcher-made questionnaire tagged, "Lecturers' welfare in Nigeria's President Bola Ahmen Tinubu renewed hope agenda and effective graduates' skill development questionnaire (LWNPBATRHGSD)" duly validated by three experts in TVET and evaluation, reliability tested using Cronbach Alpha Reliability technique with a reliability coefficient of .73 generated data for the study. Data was analysed using Linear Regression Analysis due to its suitability for a predictive study as this.

Results**Research question one**

What is the predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy?

Items 1 – 10 and 21 - 40 in "Lecturers' welfare in Nigeria's President Bola Ahmen Tinubu renewed hope agenda and effective graduates' skill development questionnaire (LWNPBATRHGSDQ)" and items 20 – 40 provided data for answering this research questions using coefficient of determination, Beta weight and standard error. Summary of results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Beta (β) Weight, Regression Co-efficient (R^2) and Standard Error (E) predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy (N = 150)

Variable	β	SE	R	R^2
Prioritising Lecturers' Welfare	.945	3.49976	.972	.945

The result presented in Table 1 shows predictive ability of President Tinubu-led renewed agenda on effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy. The Beta Weight of .945 shows that the predictive ability of this current administration on lecturers' welfare is high with equivalent high prediction on effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy. The value of R-Square of .945 indicates that prioritising lecturers' welfare will contribute to 94.5% to graduates' skill development for sustainable economy based on the prediction of both lecturers and students.

Research question two

What nature of relationship which exists between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy?

Items 11 – 20 and 21 - 40 in "Lecturers' welfare in Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu renewed hope agenda and effective graduates' skill development questionnaire (LWNPBATHRGSDQ) and items 20 – 40 provided data for answering this research questions using coefficient of determination, Beta weight and standard error. Summary of results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Beta (β) Weight, Regression Co-efficient (R^2) and Standard Error (E) nature of relationship exists between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy (N = 150)

Variable	β	SE	R	R^2
Lecturers' Welfare	.965	2.94245	.982	.965

The result presented in Table 2 shows nature of relationship which exists between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy. The Beta Weight of .985 shows a positively high relationship between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy. The value of R-Square of .965 indicates that lecturers' welfare contribute to 96.5% to graduates' skill development for sustainable economy based on the prediction of both lecturers and students.

Null hypothesis

Lecturers' welfare has no significant relationship with effective graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy

Items 11 – 20 and 21 - 40 in "Lecturers' welfare in Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu renewed hope agenda and effective graduates' skill development questionnaire (LWNPBATHRGSDQ) and items 21 – 40 provided data for answering this research questions using coefficient of determination, Beta weight and standard error. Summary of results is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Result of Linear regression analysis of no significant relationship between lecturers' welfare and effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy

Variable	β	SE	R	R^2	t	Significant at .05
Lecturers' Welfare	.965	2.94245	.982	.965	63.985	
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significant Level	
Regression	35447.070	1	35447.070	4094.122	.05	
Residual	1281.390	148	8.658			
Total	26728.460	149				

The result presented in Table 3 reveals that the calculated F-ratio of 4094.122 is by far greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 at .05 level of significance with degrees of freedom being 1, 148. In view of this revelation, the null hypothesis that lecturers' welfare has no significant relationship with effective graduates' skill development is rejected. This implies that significant relationship exists between lecturers' welfare and graduates' skill development. Again, the coefficient of determination of .965 indicates that lecturers' welfare contributes 96.5% to graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy.

Discussion of findings

Findings of this study are that: Prioritizing lecturers' welfare in the present Nigeria's renewed hope agenda has a positively high predictive ability on graduates' skill development for a sustainable global economy; lecturers' welfare has a positively high and significant relationship with effective graduates' skill development for a sustainable global economy. Notably, every administration in Nigeria is supposed to be interested in graduates' skill development, considering the goals of university education as a veritable tool optimum contribution to national development by intensifying its programmes for the development of a high level manpower, making entrepreneurial skills acquisition (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

These findings came out surprising, considering the slow response of the current administration on the lingering welfare issues affecting lecturers in Federal universities of which the current administration is yet to adequately address. The positive response could be attributed to the high expectation of these lecturers in having their welfare issues addressed. The surprise springs from the fact that this administration is yet to make policy statement on the withheld salaries of about eight months following an unwarranted legal battle Federal Government of Nigeria, employer of lecturers in Federal universities have had as a result of the strike action by these lecturers under the umbrella of ASUU. What seems to be a pronouncement indicating readiness of Federal Government to negotiate with lecturers came as a result of threats by the Nigeria Labour Congress, an umbrella union of which ASUU belongs.

On the other hand, findings arising from this study further strengthen the assertion of some Nigerians, who seem to repose so much confidence in the current administration's interest in the development of education generally. A report by a former students' leader portrayed the Nigeria's current administration's President as being education friendly (Ogunje, 2022; Young, 2022). Again, many Nigerians in different works of life are advising government to show greater commitment to education (Agboluaje, 2023). Interestingly also, the level of awareness unfolding in the nation's polity based on the experience of the last general election that ushered in the present administration (of President Tinubu) may have sounded a strong signal and lesson with lecturers having positive disposition that truly their welfare issues will be addressed.

The implication of this finding is that welfare of lecturers should be given priority by the current administration. This will help boost lecturers' commitment to the actualization of the goals of university education, especially in the area of effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy.

Conclusion

Based on the findings made in this study, it is concluded that university lecturers' welfare in Federal universities in Nigeria needs the prioritizing decision of the president. It is equally concluded that effective graduates' skill development for sustainable global economy can only be achieved through effective training and achievable with enhanced welfare of lecturers.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn, it is recommended that:

1. The current administration should as a matter of priority and urgency address the lingering welfare issues of lecturers in Nigeria Federal universities
2. Both the Federal Government of Nigeria as proprietor of Federal universities that employs lecturers; and lecturers themselves under the auspices of ASUU in conjunction with university management should develop lasting solution to lecturers' welfare to allow for smooth academic calendar and graduates' training and skill development for sustainable global economy. This could be achieved through funding model that include

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