

Institutional Resources as a Predisposing Factor of Academic Attainments of Female University Students in Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Lilian Manwa

Lecturer, School of Education, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

Abstract: - The aim of this study was to establish the influence of institutional resources as a predisposing factor of academic attainments of female university students in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. A qualitative paradigm which adopted a case study design was used to elicit data from thirty female university students. The sample of the thirty participants was conveniently selected from a population of five hundred female students in second to fourth year. Data were collected using focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires. The findings revealed that the institution lacks most of the important equipment and those available equipment are mostly outdated and broken down. The female students were the worst affected since most of their parents were failing to subsidise the available institutional resources due to economic challenges. The study also established that shortage and non availability of most basic resources was negatively influencing the academic attainments of female university students. The institution was seen to be failing to provide adequate material and human resources. It is recommended that the government of Zimbabwe retake its responsibility of educating its citizens since the families are failing to subsidise the scanty and unsuitable resources at the institution. Fundraising projects should be given the priority at institutional level in order to supplement the shortage of funds.

Key words: Resources, female students, institution, predisposing, academic attainments

I. INTRODUCTION

In Zimbabwe, the availability and unavailability of resources is among other determinants of academic performance that has taken their toll on the girl child's education (Gaidzanwa, 2012; Nziramasanga, 1999:177). Most research outcomes showed that both adequate supply of teachers and material resources greatly influenced students' academic performance (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2003:10). Resource provision is pivotal in attaining good academic achievement as such the importance of resources cannot be overestimated (Akungu, 2014; WHO, 2012:5; Psacharopoulos, 2002:2). Kapur (2018) and Ebhohimen (2006:6) argue that resources are the inputs in education while academic performance is the output; and this mean that without the resources (input) there is no academic performance (output). The study by Cheesman et al. (2006:9) in West Indies revealed that financial constraints are among the main determinants of academic performance since without financial resources there will be no recruitment of more

human resources and procurement of consumables which are used during the process of teaching and learning.

Ford (2002:190) found out that throughout the world girls are likely to perform badly and leave school early due to many reasons, with economic reasons as key factors. Lack of resources is a major factor that inhibits good academic performance since the payment of fees may be done after the student has been barred from school for a long period of time until fees payment is done. Students miss out on education a lot due to lack of resources such as fees and material resources like exercise books and text books. Lovenheim (2017) and Watkins (2000:154) say that at the global level, the gender and academic performance gap in primary, secondary school and college enrolment is narrowing; however, the rate at which it is narrowing in developing countries is far too slow due to poverty and poor academic performance.

Adetunde and Akensina (2008:378) sought to find out why developing countries are lagging behind in fulfilling the millennium goal due to lack of resources and financial constraints; the blame was on 'political will. Prioritising the needs for scholars especially female scholars has of late not been considered as important in the national budget since the burden of education in most developing countries including Zimbabwe have been placed on the family. Most schools in most developing countries including Zimbabwe lack basic resources which are necessary for effective teaching and learning which lead to better academic performance (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014; Oxfam, 2005:1; Zvobgo, 1999:30). Resources, both human and material are pivotal in achieving educational goals for government, parents and the students.

Throughout the world, most education system receives the biggest share of the government expenditure, but the difference in the quality of service and provision of resources is determined by the economic status of the country (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014; Manwa & Manwa, 2013; Watkins, 2000:40). Ogbogu (2014) and Gaidzanwa (2012:1) criticise limited budgetary allocations for the education sectors in most developing countries, suggesting that this not only kills the quality of education but also defeats the many strides taken to achieve gender parity in education as women and girls are

highly likely to drop out of school than boys where the education becomes defunct.

Lacour, Laura and Tissington (2011:528) found out that lack of resources due to poverty in some parts of the United State of America has a direct influence on teaching and learning and this affects academic performance. Governments for developing countries including Zimbabwe are facing the challenge of providing enough resources which have a bearing on the teaching, learning and academic performance of the female students due to poverty. Nziramasanga (1999:180) states that although education has the lion's share on the Zimbabwean budget, the amount allocated is far from meeting the basic needs and the allocation per head is about a dollar each per year. It is amazing on how the schools and universities are managing and how female students can manage to attain good passes without the necessary resources.

The World Bank report (1988:2), commenting on the decline of general spending of education by a number of governments, realised that a number of players Zimbabwe included, contributed to the trend which negatively affects the provision of resources in schools and colleges. Janti and Cox (2011:2) also state that it is also very vital to have sufficient and adequate human resources in terms of teacher quality for the teaching of all subjects in the school curriculum. Assuming that necessary facilities are adequately provided for, the environment is conducive to learning, the curriculum satisfies the needs of the students and the students themselves have interest in learning, learning cannot take place without the presence of the teacher/lecturer (Smith, 2018; FAO, 2012:2). Hence, the provision of qualified and skilled human resources is very critical.

Janti and Cox (2011:2) state that the United States of America is committing millions of dollars annually to the acquisition of and subscription to library and information resources to meet the research, teaching and learning needs of students. This may indicate that most students in America easily access reading materials which positively influence their academic performance. Provision of resources such as library resources which affect academic performance is pivotal in achieving good academic results. In a period of economic turmoil, resources scarcity and increased competitiveness in the attraction and retention of students, the ability to demonstrate the value gained by utilising library resources is becoming increasingly important in order to achieve good academic attainments (Lei & Li, 2015; Akungu, 2014; Janti & Cox, 2011:1). Students produce substandard assignments when they fail to access reference sources. The research by Janti and Cox (2011:2) established that some resources such as reading materials and textbooks have a significant impact on academic performance of the students while some have lesser effects. This means that without textbooks and other reading materials students and teachers will suffer data shortage and subsequently no meaningful teaching and learning will take place.

Macionis and Plummer (2008:642) on their study on funding of education in Japan, revealed that the Japanese government invests heavily in the education of students who perform well in examinations while students performing poorly are pushed out of the education system, the female students are the most affected since they lag behind in academic performance. This implies that although the education system in Japan is heavily sponsored it caters for the intelligent only and leaves the less intelligent out of the system; this has an impact on the female students who are lagging behind in academic performance. The general aim of education globally is to impart knowledge and skills to all the scholars both the intelligent and the lesser ones. For teaching and learning to be effective, it should be fully sponsored. Resources play a pivotal role in achieving teaching and learning goals such as good pass rate.

The availability of resources in schools is mainly determined by the education funding systems; in developing countries is a joint venture of parents contributing the larger percentage through levies, fees and in kind (Smith, 2018; UNESCO-IBE: 2006/07). The Government of Zimbabwe contributes very little in terms of infrastructure, equipment and consumables (Zvobgo, 1999:30). This funding system raises questions as to whether children from different socio-economic backgrounds receive the same quality of education and whether they manage to attain good academic performance. Most of the rural schools do not have electricity and other resources required to address the educational needs of all students in order to achieve good results (UNESCO-IBE, 2006/07; Stainback, Stainback & Forest, 1981). The academic performance of university students is also determined by the quality of education they acquired prior tertiary education.

The promotion of good academic achievements in education requires integrated strategies of resource provision at all levels, from the family, community, local and national government and also the international community (Watkins, 2000:191). This implies that allocation of funds towards the education system should involve all stake holders. Ebhohimen (2006:4) states that problems of budgetary allocation at ministerial level are the national concern, about how resources should be allocated and shared between educational departments. Problems related to how available funds are distributed within the education sector can be a difficult task when the resources are insufficient and when the exercise is done by a few individuals who may be biased. Distribution of resources is a challenge especially when there is a scramble of resources at the institution such as at university level. Priorities differ from institution to institution this inevitably affects the teaching, learning and the academic performance

The demand for more and better schools and universities, the need to relate curriculum to the needs of the child and the environment, is the major concern of most governments in developing countries (Saito, 2011:19; Wood, 2008:22). This will be fully oriented to their environment but

cannot be fully accomplished without the aid of competent lecturers and teachers. The study that compared achievements of students in schools with adequate material resources and academic achievements of students in schools with inadequate material resources indicated that resources are pivotal in achieving good results (FAO, 2012:1; Hung, 2011:21). In Zimbabwe, elite private schools have the privilege of having very few students per class who receive maximum attention from the teacher and this improves on academic performance of the students.

Both supply of material resources and quality teachers are intimately related and are critical in achieving good academic achievements of the female students (Haegeland et al., 2005:15). Adequate supply of lecturers/teachers and material resources greatly influenced students' academic performance as revealed by most studies that schools which have adequate material resources obtained a mean score which was significantly greater than that of the schools without adequate material resources (Gwarinda, 2001:41; Watkins, (2000:191). In other words, there are statistical significant differences in the scores of students in schools with adequate material resources and the scores of students in schools with inadequate material resources. Haegeland et al. (2005:15) found out that in both the public discussion and in the research literature, it is commonly argued that attending a school with limited resources is likely to be particularly harmful to low performing students. The school environment has a strong positive relationship with students' ratings of their overall school satisfaction, students' self-esteem, and academic performance (Cram & Docampo, 2016; Hee Chee et al., 2005:5). It is against such a background that this study sought to find out the influence of institutional resources as a predisposing factor of academic attainments of female university students using the following objectives.

Objectives

1. to examine the quality and adequacy of institutional material and human resources at a university in Masvingo, Zimbabwe
2. to establish how the provision of institutional material and human resources influence academic attainments of female university students

II. METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a case study design in order to solicit intensive empirical data. A case study according to Creswell (2013) involves an exploration and description of an event, people or individuals. University female students are unique people who are in a peculiar environment. A case study was suitable because of its potency of gathering data which is rich of detailed descriptions of the situation under study. Denscombe (2007) avers that a case study focuses on one or just a few occurrences of a specific phenomenon. This means all the factors related to the provision of resources at the institution when studied together portray a typical character of

a case study. A case study permit the researcher to focus on one entity rather than many (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Yin, 2011).

Sample

The current study used a sample of thirty (30) participants who were purposefully selected from a population of about five hundred students from one institution in Masvingo doing part/level two to four or in their second to fourth year. A sample of thirty students was conveniently selected. According to Creswell (2014) convenient sampling increases the utility of data collected from the participants. With regard to the sample size, this study was cognisant of Creswell's (2014) suggestion that a case study sample should involve a limited number of individuals (1–40). With a smaller sample size, the researcher was able to collect much detail from each individual. As such, case studies emphasises the "richness of data" from the real life experiences of participants (Creswell, 2014; Yin 2011).

Data collection Instruments

This study used focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires to collect the data from the female students. Marshall and Rossman (2011) affirm that open-ended questionnaires combined with focus group discussions are good for checks and balances so as to improve on the trustworthiness the study. Five focus group discussions which comprised of five (5) students in each group were used in order to cater for credibility as a factor of trustworthiness and also to allow flexibility in the questioning process and the opportunity to probe for additional information (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2012; Wiersma & Juss, 2008). During the four focus group discussions which comprised of five participants in each group were conducted observing research ethics such as consent and confidentiality. Open-ended questionnaires were also used because of its advantage to solicit views, opinions and feelings of participants observing anonymity. Creswell (2014) and Denzin (2012) assert that open-ended questionnaires allow for secrecy as the participants are not associated with the information they provide. The open-ended questionnaires were administered by the researcher to five (5) students and all participants were able to fill in and return the questionnaires during the same day.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data from both instruments were presented in narrative form and thematically analysed. Emerging themes were presented and analysed according to research objectives. Data analysis is a process of coding and bringing up themes from the participants point of view (Cohen & Manion, 2007; Gilbert, 2011; Silverman, 2010; Sidhu, 2003). The discussion of findings from this study was done from the perspective of the participants.

The quality and adequacy of institutional material and human resources at a university in Masvingo, Zimbabwe

The study established that generally there are very few available resources and some are not available at the institution which negatively influenced the academic performance of the female students. The students mentioned that the available material resources were not in good shape and some were outdated. Most of the students submitted that lack of resources was very stressful and that affected their academic performance. One female student said that they walked long distances due to lack of transport which was not good for females since they lack endurance unlike the males especially when experiencing monthly cycles. The students also highlighted that financial resources were the key to good academic performance since most of the resources that are used to achieve effective teaching and learning are procured using money. Financial resources are pivotal since education is an expensive commodity (OECD, 2019; Lei & Li, 2015; Ogbogu, 2014). One of the female students lamented that without a good financial base they are stressed and this led to poor academic performance. All the thirty female students revealed that lack of resources at the university was a cause for concern. Most participants pointed out that there were a number of resources which were unavailable, inadequate, out of order or out dated and that those available resources were very expensive such as food. All female students indicated that there was some equipment such as books, chairs and desks which were torn or broken.

Financial resources are pivotal since education is an expensive commodity. The university lacks latest technological equipment such as computers and internet facilities in all subjects which should benefit females who are in most cases are not given by parents as they look down upon the female child. Some participants indicated that face a challenge of books in the library. According to Soria, Fransen & Nackerud (2017) library books are a resource which is critical in submitting standard assignments. One student submitted that as females they suffer most since they do not have the time during the evenings to wait in the queue to borrow overnight books. Lack of service resources such as buildings, equipment and consumables were noted by all participants as one of the major stressors of both students and lecturers resulting in female students performing poorly. Female students who were doing practical subjects indicated that they were finding it difficult to acquire skills with outdated equipment and tools.

The present study established that availability or non-availability of institutional resources influenced the academic performance of the female university students. Lovenheim (2017) and OECD (2011) argue that education systems are responsible for providing required teaching and learning resources in order for students to achieve good results. Lack of resources was found in this study to be negatively affecting teacher competence and subsequently academic performance of female students.

Provision of institutional resources and academic attainments of female university students

The current study revealed that the institution was using inefficient means of supplying resources which are pivotal for effective teaching and learning to achieve good results. The finding on resources is related to Jantti and Cox's (2011:6) observation that timely provision of resources is crucial for achieving good academic performance although some resources have a significant impact on academic performance while others have less impact. The finding on resources is related to the transactional theory which views the child as existing within an intricate system of variables such as culture and resources, all of which could have an effect on his/her development and achievements (Soria, Fransen & Nackerud, 2017; Paquette & Ryan 2001:3). It may therefore be argued that female students' academic performance is greatly influenced by inadequate or adequate supply of resources.

The study revealed that poor financial resources were the major hindrance to the procurement of resources. An adequate supply of human and material resources greatly influenced students' academic performance. The procurement of consumables was done in a bureaucratic manner which in most cases delayed the provision of resources. The female student is the worst affected by shortage of resources as the culture of Zimbabwe gives preference to the boy child (OECD, 2019; Lovenheim, 2017; Akungu, 2014). Such a scenario causes female students to get minimum support from most family members. The present finding relates to Considine and Zappala's (2002:91) observation that the provision of financial resources by the government and institution has a strong relationship with the academic performance of the students and that this is well established in sociological research. It also emerged from the present study that lecturers were a serious human resource shortage. Most students indicated that lecturers were conveying messages during lectures that they were not happy and lacked the motivation to deliver the lectures due to severe shortages of resources and also the student lecturer ratio is very high. This present finding confirms Chireshe and Shumba's (2011:114) observation that teachers' motivation influences teacher/lecturers' competences and delivery of lessons/lectures.

It also emerged that parents or families were struggling to pay tuition fees in time since the government was not assisting the parents by providing loans. Most of the female students were facing difficulties in acquiring both basic needs and requirements for effective learning since they were often overlooked by their families who favoured the male children. This is worsened by the fact that females in general have more needs than males (Kapur, 2018; Gwarinda, 2001:41; Watkins, 2000:191). Procurement of university buses and building of hostels for students was noted to be a mammoth task for the institution because of the ailing economy.

Lack of accommodation at or near the university emerged as a source of worry for many non-resident students which have a negative bearing on academic performance since walking long distances from home locations to the campuses cause fatigue. Female students suffer more since the culture places the burden on them to do a lot of domestic work before leaving the home. It also emerged from this study that travelling from campus to campus is another issue which causes stress for female students since the institution has very few buses which are used to ferry students from one campus to another (shuttle service) during peak hours of lectures. Fatigue may influence the concentration of female students.

Kapungu (2007:23) says that bearing in mind the importance of material resources to teaching and learning, adequate instructional aids or media should be provided for the teaching of all subjects in order to increase students' performance in the subjects. Teachers can be frustrated without adequate supply of materials needed to teach their subjects. It is therefore highly essential to provide adequate and relevant materials for the teaching and learning not only of practical subjects but of all other subjects in the secondary school curriculum so as to attain a good pass rate (Yara & Otieno, 2010; Gwarinda, 2001:41). The adequate provision of resources influences the teaching and learning outcomes of the female students. Without both human and material resources, there is no effective teaching and learning and then results in poor academic performance by the female students.

Lack of resources affect differently various subjects with practical subjects the worst affected and this affects academic performance of the university female students. Practical subjects, which are equated to life skills, are the most affected since they need a lot of resources and equipment for pupils to gain skills when learning so as to produce good performance (Cram & Docampo, 2016; Mavhunga, 2009:33; Gwarinda, 2001:41). Effective teaching and learning is based on equipment and consumables and teachers also need realia so as to demonstrate concepts and skills easily (Yara & Otieno, 2010; Watkins, 2000:156). It is not possible to impart skills and attain good academic achievements and knowledge without resources hence the need for proper funding strategies. Kapungu's study focused on the effects of resources on school children. The present study would want to find out if the same affects university female adult students.

The findings on provision of resources also indicated that there is lack of funding for procurement of required specialized equipment for laboratories which are necessary for learning and practice purposes. Students need to continuously practice in the laboratory for effective learning and skills acquisition. Because of the lack of resources, students were obliged to queue to take turns to access the laboratories. Female students are the most affected as some of them may lack the physical strengths to queue for the scarce resources. The study also revealed that financing of the procurement of modern equipment and tools to furnish the laboratories was

required in order to be used for both lecturing and learning purposes. Computer lessons were the most affected as there was a lack of new computers. Most schools and tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe, lack resources to keep abreast of technological developments that are necessary for effective teaching and learning which, in turn, lead to good academic achievements (Cram & Docampo, 2016; Watkins, 2000:39; Zvobgo, 1999:30). The reason why computer lectures are the most affected is that if there are no computers in the laboratory, lectures cannot take place. This disadvantages female students mostly since they may fail to get extra tuition to compensate for lost time since they are in most cases second to the male child who are mostly given preference in allocation of resources by parents.

The study also revealed that if students were hungry, they were not able to fully participate during lectures. This finding concurs with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which defines physiological needs as basic needs for life. The study also revealed that physiological needs should be met in full so as to improve on academic performance. Considine and Zappala's (2002:90) found that the family is responsible for providing food, security, love and respect to instill acceptable moral standards which positively influence good academic performance. Male students in most cases are more resilient to harsh conditions such as walking long distances with an empty stomach than female students (Lovenheim, 2017; Rao, 2004:141).

The level of support the female student gets from the parents is influenced by the family's economic background (Lacour & Tissington, 2011:522; Watkins, 2000:39). The family background of the female university students which was mostly characterised by a lack of finance to offer material support to the student had a negative effect on the provision of resources and subsequently academic performance of the student. The study revealed that some female students were reluctant to make presentations as they felt inferior because of their poor quality clothing and this destroyed their self-esteem and confidence which obviously influenced academic performance negatively. The government is failing to offer bursaries to the disadvantaged students for them to cater for their upkeep.

The study also revealed that female students' academic performance was affected by lack of funds by the institution to engage counselling services in the university. Counselling services are vital as in some cases they save lives and reduce suicide cases. The female students experienced a lot of psycho-social challenges due to poor economic climate that they needed counselling. The need for counselling relates to Chireshe's (2006:5) observation that students need counselling in order to overcome the traumatic experiences they have undergone in life. Lack of proper counselling may influence academic performance in many negative ways as some of the female students may waste a lot of study time trying to solve issues which are difficult or cannot be solved. This finding is related to Chireshe's (2006:5) observation that

effective counselling results in an increase in behaviour related to achievement such as improved study habits, efficient use of time and greater academic effort.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lack of resources in the institution under study indicated that it is very difficult for the female students to attain good academic performance. It can be concluded from the findings that for the female students to realize their maximum potential they need adequate resources especially material and human resources that are directly linked to teaching and learning such as media and lecturers. Lack of basic resources was found to be very stressful and caused anxiety to both female students and their lecturers. The study also revealed that the procurement procedure is not effective because it is too bureaucratic and the provision of resources especially consumables is in most cases not done in time.

Basing from these findings the study recommends that the burden of educating the nation be lifted from parents and guardians but to be the burden of the state as it is the responsibility of the government to educate its citizens. The government can have a revolving fund which is given to students as loans which they return with very little interest after completion of the course. Institutions should be encouraged by the government and nongovernmental organizations to have fundraising projects which are monitored by the Finance Ministry in order to supplement the scarce resources and averting the disappointing bureaucratic procedure.

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