

ACADEMIC RETENTION, RESEARCH CAPACITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

**Volume 3 Issue 2
(August 2021)**

e-ISSN 2716-5191

doi: 10.30997/ijsr.v3i2.121

ARTICLE INFO**Article history:**

Received: 15-05-2021

Revised version received: 08-06-2021

Accepted: 08-07-2021

Available online: 05-08-2021

Keywords:

academic retention system; research capacity development orientation; African Universities; education and development.

How to Cite:

Rufai, S., Olatunji, H., & Musa, B. (2021). ACADEMIC RETENTION, RESEARCH CAPACITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES. *Indonesian Journal of Social Research (IJSR)*, 3(2), 79-91.

<https://doi.org/10.30997/ijsr.v3i2.121>

Corresponding Author:

Saheed A. Rufai

ahmadrufai.saheed@ssu.edu.ng



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Saheed A. Rufai¹, Hafsa Olatunji², Bello Musa³

¹*Department of Curriculum Studies, Sokoto State University, Nigeria*

²*Department of Economics, Sokoto State University, Nigeria*

³*Department of Educational Foundations, Sokoto State University, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

There is a shift of interest towards the current pace of development in Africa, especially with regard to academic research capacity. The rate at which advancements are being recorded in this and other sectors has not been encouraging, as evident from official records. Scholars and researchers in various disciplines have correlated development to education and identified close associations between the level of performance of any citizenry or manpower, and the quality of its education. Accordingly, the quality of life on the African continent has been characterised as the output variable and the quality of education including that of the teachers, as the input variable. The former variable, too, which, in the context of this study, is the totality of experience that informs educational directions in Africa, is regarded as a product of the input variable. Consequently, the tertiary educational level, especially the university system, is more strongly associated with the quality of performance. This may be explained through the dominant thinking that the tertiary system is primarily concerned with the production of manpower for various sectors. While there is ample evidence of research into this question, there is insufficient evidence of research into the interplay of the academic retention system and research capacity development orientation in African universities. Employing a combination of the historical and analytic methods, our study attempts to investigate that hitherto underrepresented question. The study found among others that the academic retention factor automatically affects the research capacity development orientation and therefore confirms the dominant principle that no system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The significance of this study lies in its ameliorative propositions for revitalizing the academic retention system and research capacity development orientation in African universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scholars and researchers in various disciplines have continued to work frantically towards the realization of what may be accepted as a satisfactory quality in research capacity development in specific academic territories (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003; Ocholla, 2005; Ramose, 2016), which is why, as will be demonstrated later in this study, the current level of achievement or performance in research capacity development, especially in African universities, may not be accepted as ideal or adequate (Ramose, 2004; Thompson, 2003; Nkoane, 2006; Bangura, 2005; Too, Chepchieng, & Ochola, 2015; Archer, 2017; Mgwebi, 2019; Salau, Worlu, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Atolagbe & Salau, 2021) for the desired level of development in various sectors of the national economies on the continent.

The issue of capacity development for various sectors has been closely correlated with the quality of research capacity at the tertiary level of education, especially the university. For instance, Anokye, Okri, and Adie (2019) argue that the African labour markets have gradually become underdeveloped along the years owing to the deterioration in capacity occasioned by the poor management of the academic manpower of universities. In specific terms, Anokye, Okri and Adie (2019) identify, as factors which hinder capacity development in African universities, such problems as lack of motivation or poor incentives, lack of proper professional training arrangements, decay in infrastructure, as well as politicization of academic issues. It should be noted that the connection between the academic staff retention system and research capacity development orientation lies in the fact that a qualified, productive and efficient academic workforce can play a significant role in research capacity development, which is why a substandard academic manpower may not be expected to champion an ideal research capacity development system.

However, the literature in this field is replete with studies showing that the challenge of academic retention and research capacity development is not peculiar to African universities (Too, Chepchieng, & Ochola, 2015; Archer & Carmona, 2014; Archer, 2017; Mgwebi, 2020; Salau et al., 2021). For instance, Too et al. (2015) argue that the question of academic retention has assumed a global dimension, as there is hardly an institution or a country without its own share of the challenge. Too et al. (2015) alludes to the fact that the problem has received some attention in the literature where the contributions of both the academic manpower and those of the non-academic workforce to the enhancement of the quality of university retention have been subjected to edifying research searchlight. It is unmistakable from the line of argument pursued by the research under discussion that the capacity of staff affects the quality of retention reforms.

Yet, one may not subscribe to Too et al. (2015)'s allegation that the available body of scholarship on the subject has not demonstrated the effect of university staff retention on quality of education, especially in private universities in Kenya. It should be noted that this is a question of the interplay of the input and output variables where the quality of the former automatically determines the latter. However, one may not totally resist the temptation to embrace the hypothetical thinking that high quality academic manpower occasioned by high quality academic retention system does not necessarily translate to high academic research capacity and, by extension, high professional capacity for various sectors of the economy.

To further demonstrate the global nature of the problem of academic retention and research capacity building, Too et al. (2015) discuss a relevant experience recorded in the United States, where a single academic session witnessed the exit of an estimated 7.7% of academic staff who withdrew their services and moved to other institutions of higher learning. It is remarkable that 29% of such individuals who left the institutions in question were retirees who had served for the prescribed length of time, whereas 71% of them left for a multiplicity

of other reasons, which proves that problems associated with academic retention are not peculiar to any particular cultural setting, ideological orientation, socio-economic characterization or geographical location.

There is no gainsaying that the role of academic staff in development transcends teaching, research, and social services (Anokye et al., 2019). They complement the role of the community by playing a significant role in character formation, which is a *sine qua non* for responsible citizenship and social integration. They enrich the quality of decisions through their meaningful contribution of ideas at all levels within the university system, especially as members of statutory and adhoc committees. Besides, the fact that they are the interpreters of contents and implementers of curricula design based on educational policy directions offered by the government makes them central to nation-building and integral to development. This view is consistent with Akuegwu (2005) who sees the tertiary level of education, especially the university, as a vehicle for the cultivation and promotion of a national identity commitment which has the potential to facilitate the production of responsible, dedicated, loyal, honest and conscientious citizenry.

In a study on academic staff of government-owned universities in Nigeria, Salau et al (2021) found a strong association between academic retention and sustainable development. This finding, according to the authors, is consistent with findings from such previous studies as Okoro, Omeluzor & Bamidele (2014), as well as Khalid, Irshad & Mahmoud (2012), and Salau, Osibanjo, Oludayo & Falola, (2018). The implication of the consistency of the study under review with the other studies alluded to by the author is that the strong association between academic staff retention and capacity development is well represented in the research literature.

While Salau et al. (2021) focus on public universities in Nigeria to represent the dimension of academic retention and research capacity development in African universities, Too et al (2015) studies the same variable in the Kenyan context with a focus on private universities in the country. The study in question demonstrates that academic staff retention has the potential to affect the quality of education. In specific terms, it was found that 87.5% of students agreed that academic staff retention affects quality of education, which, incidentally, is consistent with the view of 84.0% of the the academic staff. The same position is in agreement with the view expressed by 87.5% of the human resource managers. The remarkable consistencies in the pattern of quantitative data generated from the opinions of the various levels of stakeholders sampled in the research gives a clear picture of the relationship between the two variables.

Pursuant to the role of university academic staff, Anokye et al. (2019) articulates the importance of quality control in the selection and retention of academic manpower for the university system. The attention paid by the government and other employers of labour to the quality of manpower involved in teaching at the university level, as demonstrated through the often rigorous selection process, is a testimony to the recognition accorded to such a role. However, the attention involved in this regard has not always been of the same nature as the effort or support involved in the retention of such academic staff. There may not be a better way of strengthening the academic staff retention system than motivation, incentives, professional development, and welfare services, among others. Mgwebi (2019) captures the centrality of the role of academic staff to national development where he characterizes university functions as the 'first-order' which covers research and teaching and the 'second-order' which covers community services (p. 17).

In examining factors instrumental to low academic retention rate in South African universities, Seeletse & Thabane (2016) argue that the education authorities in the country seem bereft of academic retention skills having failed to keep some of the high profile academics that would have been an asset to the country. They further argue that there are gross deficiencies in the education sector in the country with regard to policy, profiles,

organizational orientation, professional knowledge and skills, as well as operational strategies, revolving around academic staff retention and administration. Among the factors that have culminated in resignation by most of the experienced academics are low remuneration, lack of motivation, unsatisfactory administration, unsystematic work evaluation, and preference for other institutions.

A searchlight beam has also been thrown on Egypt, another leading African country. In this context, Hafez, AbouelNeel and Elsaid (2017) examine the effect of talent management on employee retention in the Egyptian university system. The findings from the Egyptian experience of academic retention and research capacity development do not offer a departure from the findings of other studies, as enumerated in the foregoing. That African universities are gradually getting handicapped through their failure to retain significant proportions of their academic manpower seems well represented in the literature (Tettey, 2006). Similarly, that their failure in academic retention is affecting academic performance in various fields, including the area of research capacity building, may therefore not be arguable. In simple logic, what this implies is an interesting commonality or remarkable consistency in the African experience with regard to the subject of the present research.

It may be hypothetically stated that research capacity development as a concept is so self-explanatory that little or no special learning is required to discern it. After all, virtually everyone has an idea of the implication of each of the words involved. However, the need for scholarly precision or appreciable level of intellectual accuracy informs a critical reconsideration of the concept in the context of African universities, with regard to their implication in the development on the continent. The literature is replete with evidence of inquiry into the effect of research on development in various settings of the world. However, there is little evidence of attention to questions of availability, productivity, quality, and utility in connection with the interplay of research capacity development in African universities and general development on the continent. The need to venture into such an undertaking is both worthwhile and, to some degree, intellectually rewarding, especially in view of the association between research capacity and development in various sectors. This paper, therefore, seeks to address such a need, with an eye on specific objectives.

In other words, the paper is intended to respond to the long-felt but often misaddressed need for a detailed, critical, unbiased, engagement with issues in research capacity development in African universities. The purposes of the paper are therefore to examine issues in research capacity development in African universities, investigate the implication of such issues for development in Africa, and offer an ameliorative framework with potential to alter the landscape of research capacity development in African universities. In specific terms, the paper is aimed at achieving three objectives, namely, to examine issues in academic staff retention and research capacity development in African universities; to investigate the implication of such issues for development in Africa; and to provide a framework with potential to endow research in African universities some measure of efficacy.

For a systematic pursuit of the above-stated three objectives, the study is guided by three corresponding questions, namely: What issues of present concern are there in academic staff retention and research capacity development in African universities? What is the implication of such issues for development in Africa? and What framework has potential to alter the landscape of research capacity development for efficacy?

2. METHODS

The paper, which is essentially of qualitative orientation, employs a combination of the historical method and analytical philosophy. In specific terms, the historical method facilitates the investigation of the historical backgrounds, political, economic, and cultural underpinnings of the current state of research capacity development in African universities, as well as their

contemporary institutional framework (Bhatt, 1994). The relevance of the analytic method lies in the critical analysis of the specific issues involved (Dever, 2017) in the institutional and operational frameworks of academic retention and research capacity development in African universities. This inquiry tool, it should be noted, takes a step beyond the participant-observer methodologies of ethnography (McCormick, 1990). Its relevance to this study also lies in the conjecture that most African universities are inadequate in academic retention and research capacity development skills and that such inadequacies in their performance can only be clearly exposed through the instrumentality of the analytic method (Kosterec, 2016). Data for the study was conducted through library search and documents analysis. Both resource materials and official documents were relied upon in the research. The systematic procedure of engaging with the subject of this paper is therefore through a critical examination of the literature and other documents on the two independent variables, namely the academic retention system and the research capacity development orientation upon which development or nation-building is dependent.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The issue of academic retention is one of the most widely covered in contemporary literature. That explains why it may be stated without any fear of contradiction that academic retention –whether of lecturers or students- has earned a central place in the scholarship of education, for some time, now (Arevalo, So, & McNaughton-Cassill, 2016; Johnsons, 2013; Bowen, 2019; Johnson, 2019; Turner & Thomson, 2014; Hunn, 2014; Han, Susan, & Thomas, 2017; Jean-Baptiste, 2019; Mosketti, Plunkett, Efrat & Yomtov, 2018; George, Kristina, Marianna, & George). The subject has also engaged the attention of professionals in various education related outlets including The Chronicle of Higher Education, Washington, DC., which recently paid some attention to the subject (January, March, June, 2021). What this implies is that academic retention is a subject that enjoys both primacy and currency among scholars and researchers.

It should be pointed out that having addressed in the *Introduction* the first research questions (RQ 1) for this study namely what issues of present concern are there in academic staff retention and research capacity development in African universities? the present section proffers answers to Research Questions 2 and 3 namely what is the implication of such issues for development in Africa?, and what framework has potential to alter the landscape of research capacity development for efficacy? There is no gainsaying that it has been demonstrated in the foregoing that there are close associations among research capacity and research utility. Either factor is a product of the quality of education, especially at higher level. Pursuant to the provision that the availability of research facilities and trained human personnel constitute research capacity, one can rationalize that the school setting, as well as both the students and their lecturers, are input variables which determine the outcome of schooling as output variable.

Given that he who pays the pipers dictates the tune, the donor countries of the Western world have remained highly influential in policy directions of African countries and hardly favour what will facilitate total liberation of Africans from their bondage. The colonial experience is an eloquent testimony in this respect, as Africans were educated in a fashion that would make them function well as obedient servants to their colonial masters. Consequently, the continent produced good versifiers and prosifiers in the languages of the colonialists with little advance in science and technology. In a similar token, the value-free educational system has culminated in economic woes and, by extension, high level of dependency on the developed world. The fact that poverty begets corruption is now evident in most African countries, and African universities are just nucleus of the larger African society.

According to Kenyinga (2020), there is a serious concern over inattention to research-based evidence in policy formulations. The importance of evidence from research to informed policies and result-oriented campaigns is well articulated in the research scholarship. An appreciable research capacity is therefore regarded as a good vehicle to strengthen public policy through the instrumentality of research findings reduced to intelligible policy directions for sustainable development.

Pursuant to the realization of the noble objective of research capacity development in African universities, the African Development Bank's African Development Institute (ADI) has taken it upon itself to proffer possible solutions to various research capacity handicaps associated with funding constraints in African universities and other tertiary institutions. It is in a bid to ensure a productive engagement with the challenge of research capacity development on the continent that the ADI has called for contributions laced with policy recommendations on the subject of the development focused initiative. It is derivable from the initiative involved in this regard that the problem of research capacity development has been of great concern to stakeholders on the continent.

The need to provide funding for African individual researchers and research institutions committed to the training of researchers and production of sophisticated research has been of enormous importance to African countries in their quest for sustainable development. The major handicaps of individual researchers in Africa include low pay, pressure teaching workload, lack of respect for research culture, financial handicaps and unwieldy size of the class of research students. (UKCDS, 2011). It should be noted that the need to support the development of institutional capacity has also been emphasized alongside the need for the enhancement of environmental capacity.

It is common knowledge that African universities and other institutions are in dire need of research capacity development. According to Owusu, Kalipeni, Aworthwi and Kiiru (2011), the variants of research typologies that are of immense value to the continent include social science and policy research in both its basic and applied orientations. The rationale provided for this submission by the research under review is that social and policy research has potential to facilitate the generation of solutions to developmental challenges on the continent, as well as navigate a good direction for both policy formulation and implementation.

It should be acknowledged that there is an intensified effort at addressing some of the concerns arising from issues revolving around research capacity in Africa. The fact that development partners and international agencies have become decisively generous in providing financial and other forms of support through capacity enhancement initiatives on the continent, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a pointer to the importance attached to the problem. Although such initiatives are conceived of as a form of environmental capacity strengthening investment targeted at enhancing the quality of performance of national and regional research settings, it is hardly possible to adjudge the initiatives as yielding appreciable results at present (Pulford, Crossman, El-Hajj, & Bates, 2020). Sawyerr (2004) has graphically captured the varying degree of deterioration in African universities from country to country and from institution to institution at the aftermath of the educational policy somersault of the 1980s, which culminated in a shift in Africa to the strengthening of basic education at the expense of higher education. Sawyerr provides a panoramic view of African universities in the face of such a policy redirection, but focuses more on the Makerere experience in Uganda. It is noteworthy that he underscores the catastrophic effect of that development, especially in the form of 'the degradation of indigenous knowledge production capabilities in Africa at a time of heightened global appreciation of the significance of knowledge generation and application', which is the bedrock of research and research capacity development.

The African experience in the context of development offers an interesting scenario. Education and culture have been at the centre of any discourse concerning development on the

continent. This is probably responsible for a shift of interest to what is characterized as Africa-based scholarship in educational discourse (Higgs, 1997). Higgs (1997) argues that the scholarship in question is a product of the thinking that Africa has no educational thought of its own, but is rather heavily indebted to educational ideas and ideals of European origin. This view is consistent with various scholars of African origin, especially Vilakazi (2000) and Seepe (2001), who have demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that Africa has no educational thought of its own. Although the present line of thinking about education in Africa has been pursued by such African and non-African scholars in a bid to promote the need for the acceptance of indigenous education as a body of scholarship, it may also be extended to the fact that what has arguably befallen the European university system of education in terms of problem of academic retention, has most probably affected African universities, which are not known to be academically independent. Nkoane (2005) echoes the opinion of Bangura (2005), who insists that “the salvation for Africans hinges upon employing indigenous African educational paradigms which can be subsumed under the rubric of *ubuntu*gogy. According to him, this concept applies to the art and science of teaching and learning with an eye on human consideration with respect to others. Bangura captures the essence of the indigenous African knowledge as transmitted through the instrumentality of *ubuntu*gogy, and offers a survey of African thinkers’ views on teaching and learning in the African context.

The inevitability of embracing the African system of education in Africa and its Diaspora has been expressed by various African leaders and thinkers. For instance, Julius Nyerere advocates a re-education of “ourselves, to regain our former attitude of mind” (p.14), while Sekou Toure insists that “we must Africanise our education and get rid of the negative features and misconceptions inherited from an educational system designed to serve colonial purposes” (p.13). In his turn, Kwame Nkruma rationalizes that, in order for the African intelligentsia and intellectuals to feature and function in the African Revolution, they must cut “themselves free from bourgeois attitudes and ideologies imbibed as a result of colonialist education and propaganda” (p.14).

Pursuant to an attempt to address the RQ 3 namely what framework has potential to alter the landscape of research capacity development for efficacy?, it is not out of place to state that indigenous knowledge has been on and has already been accepted and recognized in the modern world. It is equally evident that there probably has not been a systematic attempt at transmitting indigenous knowledge, especially in the African setting. Yet, African scholars are gradually being rendered inept through the instrumentality of an arguably deficient system being imposed on them and which arguably develops the cognitive at the expense of the affective and the psychomotor in contradistinction to the African system of education that is almost all-embracing. For instance, ‘in industrialized countries, advanced learning and research are receiving increased attention and investment in recognition of their acknowledged contribution to economic development and global competitiveness’ (Sawyerr, 2004). Consequently, the resulting surplus capacity in the higher education sector in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries is increasingly absorbing the global excess demand for higher education in the form of students and researchers from developing countries who go to OECD for study and research, the marketing of higher education by institutions in developed countries from outside or on-site’ (p. 214).

At the end of it all, higher education assumes, in OECD circles, the status of what Mallea et al (2001), characterize as ‘export industry with a positive balance of trade’. Paradoxically, those same OECD countries capitalized on their position as donors, to curtail or moderate ‘the development of Africa’s higher education system by downgrading their support in the 1980s and 1990s to pressure African governments to favour basic education at the expense of higher education’ (Sawyerr, 2004). Such an undertaking was grounded in the argument contained in a number of World Bank documents that basic education is more rewarding and equitable than higher education in Africa. The purpose of alluding to this experience is to expose what the

OECD countries have earned through higher education, which is characteristically grounded in high research capacity, and what African countries and, by extension, African universities have been deprived of, through insufficient attention to higher education and research capacity development.

Besides, the philosophical underpinnings of higher education in African universities may not be classified as consonant with the kind of deceitful orientation that informed the dissuasion of African countries from the pursuit of development through massive investment in higher education. That explains why higher education and research capacity development in African universities which are ideally value-laden may not rely so heavily as to derive inspiration or direction from a value-free system being operated by the donor agencies seeking to prioritize for Africa. For instance, the paper and pencil method of assessment that is dominant in African universities runs counter to the practicality of African education and training as well as the perceived pragmatic nature of Afrocentric research capacity development orientation. Evidence of this lies in the high premium placed on application of knowledge in the African indigenous system as against mere commission of facts to memory which often determines excellence in other climes.

Development cannot be achieved without an outcome-based education system, especially at the tertiary level. It is a credible and effective higher education system that begets appreciable research capacity which, according to Mutula (2017), refers to the availability of both research facilities and research personnel. It is the combination of these two that arguably constitute research capacity which is normally a precursor to research utility, as the relationship between research outcomes and national development priorities. A research can be said to have some elements or level of utility if it correlates to some national development foci. It is for such a purpose that research capacity is expected to develop from time to time with a view to endowing research capacity with higher potentialities to match the challenge of national development. It should be pointed out that it matters much to pursue the realization of the objectives of higher education with regard to research capacity development in the context of indigenous African knowledge. How exactly does this affect research capacity development in African universities?.

Shabani (1996) proffers a meaningful answer to the above stated question, where he states that the capacity of individual researchers, which includes their knowledge, experience, skills, competencies, attitudes, values and general dispositions, is normally developed through the instrumentality of training programmes and active involvement in professional activities under the tutelage or mentorship of a sophisticated class of researchers who have cultivated positive research culture in the face of adequate incentive systems that is conducive to the development of the research capacity of another generation of scholars. This, to an extent, is the conventional face of research capacity development in conventional universities and research institutions.

However, a clear picture is offered below of what is characterized as the traditional, and still dominant research model in African universities, as provided by a study of research management in nine African universities, undertaken by the Association of African Universities (AAU).

...an individual or a small group of persons pursuing research on a topic of their choice and in the area of their professional interest. The typical project is still discipline oriented, university based, and funded by the university or under its auspices. It makes free use of university facilities and time and is undertaken essentially as part of the academic career of the researcher who determines what to study and whether and how to disseminate the results....The proportion of individual as against team or multidisciplinary

research projects conducted over 1089-1994 ranged from almost 95% at one end of the scale to 50% at the other...

African universities covered in the study are those of Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Ghana, Cameroun, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Cote D'Ivoire, and Malawi. It should be noted that the study in question is two decades old and has since been replicated and contextualized to other settings, even though the findings do not reflect a significant difference in the nature, pattern, and composition of research teams. What does this portend for research capacity development in African universities?. It is obvious that the kind of intellectual fecundity that characterized academic training and research capacity development in African universities in the early post-independent years and which continued to flourish for almost three decades thereafter is fast changing. This changing face may not be totally dissociated from the gradual shift from the tradition of academic rigour and merit in scholarship that was promoted by African scholars trained in those early years, but which could not be sustained in the face of a multiplicity of political, economic and socio-cultural factors that transmogrified into crises at various stages of the African post-colonial experience. In most of today's African universities, lack of adequate research capacity is, in simple logic, intertwined with lack of sufficient teaching capacity. What framework can alter the landscape of this current, undesirable academic experience? This is the subject addressed in what follows.

In the higher education sector, as noted earlier, there are numerous challenges which include that of availability and adequacy of means of undertaking research. There is therefore need for facilities, good management, and appropriate incentives. More important is the need for rigorous graduate study programmes, effective research orientation system, and the cultivation of an institutional culture that is supportive of rigorous inquiry. The deterioration of the general standard of education makes it difficult to access quality graduates for research capacity development and invariably affects intellectual activities. The pervasive corruption that bedevils the larger society has infiltrated the university system where academic excellence is often sacrificed in favour of mediocrity. Consequently, substandard graduate students admitted through a skewed means later metamorphosed into lecturers and researchers who themselves are charged with research capacity development! This is where the retention system is involved. There also is the challenge of disconnect between research and utility. There also is a tension between user-friendly research and two central drives of research excellence, namely the scientific interest of the researcher and the enthusiasm for the subject of the research on one hand and inspiration from theory or other research, on the other hand.

The academic retention factor automatically affects the research capacity development orientation in view of the fact that no system can rise above the quality of its teachers. There has been a mass movement of some of the best brains of African origin from the continent to various parts of the developed world in search for better conditions of services. Political will is a crucial factor in addressing this challenge in a manner capable of offering a sustainable solution. For instance, the Ghanaian education system was once handicapped by the movement of its academic staff to the developed world and other parts of Africa especially Nigeria, owing to Ghana's poor conditions of service with regard to remunerations and welfare packages. Anokye et al. (2019) document the impressive efforts made by Flt. Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, at that time the Head of State, who paid a decisive attention to the issue and ensured the amelioration of the experience in a fashion that culminated in the return of most of the academic staff to their duty posts.

It is derivable from the Ghanaian experience in this regard that the Head of State believed in the centrality of education to sustainable development. The question of the interplay of individual capacity, institutional capacity and environmental capacity features again at this juncture. What this means is that it is not enough to train individual researchers and equip them with requisite knowledge and skills capable of preparing them for the conduct

of systematic studies with potential to offer informed recommendations for policy direction or redirection. Rather, it is of paramount importance to take a step further towards the direction of institutional research capacity development by empowering various academic units of African universities with a view to repositioning them for effective management of research activities and coordination of institution-based evidence oriented formulations for consideration by policy makers.

As regards environmental capacity, failure to enthrone an enlightened regime with a high sense of commitment to the promotion of research capacities at both individual and institutional level is a risk factor in any research capacity development initiative. Specific issues involved here include political will, resource mobilization, and incentives provision which constitute an enabling environment where research capacity strengthening activities can easily flourish. It should be noted that the lines of demarcation between the above enumerated levels of operations in research capacity strengthening are often blurred and obscure. That explains why attention to the three is of enormous value. For instance, the absence of environmental capacity is much likely to threaten the flow of research activities at institutional and individual levels owing to the failure of the environmental factor to connect competently with the research focused thinking at the lower level. In a similar token, a low institutional capacity may slow down performance of a high individual research capacity. What is involved here is ability or inability to speak the same language. It is therefore imperative to strengthen the connections among the three levels of research capacity development. Unless the implication of academic staff quality and research capacity in sustainable development is appreciated at individual, institutional and environmental levels, efforts targeted at the facilitation of development at various levels may just be counterproductive.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to examine the concern occasioned by the shift of interest towards the current pace of development in Africa, especially with regard to academic staff retention and research capacity. The paper engaged critically with the literature to demonstrate the unimpressive level of advancements on the continents with regard to the level of progress in science and technology. It confirmed the close association between development and education as well as the correlations between the level of performance of any citizenry or manpower, and the quality of its education. Consequently, the paper demonstrated that the quality of life and experience on the African continent is, to an appreciable extent, the output variable and the quality of education including that of the teachers, the input variable. The study also emphatically associated the tertiary educational level, especially the university system, with the quality of performance. It argued this by underscoring the place of tertiary education as a vehicle for the production of manpower for various sectors of the economy. Given the preponderance of research on the role of education in development, whereas there is dearth of evidence of systematic research into the interplay of the academic retention system and research capacity development orientation in African universities, this paper investigated that hitherto underrepresented dimension. The significance of the study lies in its evidential exposition of the association between what may arguably be characterized as dominant academic retention system and research capacity development orientation in African universities, as well as the implication of such an association for sustainable development in Africa. While not claiming to be exhaustive and conclusive in exploring all possible variables for this subject, the study attempted to offer its own ameliorative propositions for possible considerations with regard to revitalizing an outcome-oriented academic retention system and research capacity development orientation in African universities. Further research into the subject may include an empirical data in a quantitative dimension. Such future research may

involve case histories with a scholarly engagement with salient issues like wastages or dropout rates with special attention to causes. In a similar token, related issues like migration and their causes, job mobility, personnel politics, and the political economy of crises and others. The future engagement with the subject of the present research may also contextualize the study into other settings with different theoretical and methodological considerations. This may be done by studying the question of academic retention and research capacity in specific regions of the continents or specific countries of a particular region on the continent. There may also be a methodological variation where individual researchers may share their personal experiences with regard to this subject through auto-ethnographical studies or by seeking a better understanding of the subject and the specific variables involved, through ethnographical research. There may also be a comparative engagement with the question through collaborative research by scholars and researchers domiciled in various universities who may want to conduct research along the lines of particular experience of the issue of academic retention and research capacity development in their individual universities. Mixed method research is another orientation that may be accorded some consideration in future research into the subject. What this means is that there is a multiplicity of ways of approaching the subject of this research differently in future, for the purpose of achieving an improved understanding that has the potential to draw the blind and adjust our view of the salient questions involved. There is no gainsaying that future research shall open hitherto unexplored vistas and navigate paths to a research of merit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The concept that has been developed into the present paper was originally worked out in a Lead Paper presented by me at the International Seminar hosted by the Deanship of Research and Graduate Studies, International University of Africa (IUA), Khartoum, in conjunction with the Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Rabat, at the University from 27th to 30th December, 2018. I would therefore like to express my appreciation to the two host institutions for inviting me as Lead Speaker at the event and for the hospitality extended to me throughout my stay in Khartoum. Yet, it should be noted that I take full responsibility for the views expressed in the article which is not in any way ideologically indebted to any group or organization. I declare that the work is no more than a modest work of scholarship that is committed to the pursuit of truth and better understanding of the subject.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, M. B. & Adeyinka, A.A. (2003). The Principles and Content of African Traditional Education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 35(4), 374-382.
- African Development Bank's African Development Institute (2021) *Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Inclusive Development in Africa post-COVID-19*. Webinar, March, 16.
- Anokye, S.A., Okri, J.A. and Adie, E.A. (2017). Retention and Brain Drain of Academic Staff in Higher Institution in Nigeria: A Case Study of University of Calabar. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, 18, 99-105.
- Archer, S. (2017). The Function of a University in South Africa. *South African Journal of Science*, 1113 (5/6), 1-20.
- Arevalo, I., So, D. & McNaughton-Cassill, M. (2016). The role of collectivism among Latino American college students. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 15 (1), 3-11.

- Bangura, K. A. (2005). Ubuntu-gogy: An African Educational Paradigm that Transcends Pedagogy, Andragogy, Ergonagy and Hentagogy. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 22, (2), 13-53.
- Bowen, J. (2019). 'Teaching naked: How moving technology out of your college classroom will improve student learning'. Keynote presented at CELT's Annual Fall Teaching Conference, Fort Wayne, IN.
- Han, Susa & Thomas, T. (2017). Effects of Academic Mindsets on College Students' Achievement and Retention. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56 (8) 1119-134.
- Higgs, P. (1997). *Curriculum Design and Implementation for Courses in Philosophy of Education at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Levels*. Centre for Scientific Development (pp. 1-36)
- Hunn, V. (2014). African American Students, Retention, and Team-Based Learning: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Retention at Predominantly White Institutions. *Journal of Black Studies*, 45 (4), 301-314.
- Jean-Baptiste, A. M. (2019). Recruiting and Retaining African Americans in BSN Programs. *ABNF Journal*, 30 (2) 44-49.
- Johnson, A. (2019). 'I Can Turn It on When I need To' : Pre-college integration, Culture, and Peer Academic Engagement among Black and Latino/a Engineering Students. *Sociology of Education*, 92 (1), 1020.
- Johnsons, L. (2013). The Benefits of a Comprehensive Retention Program for African American Students at a Predominantly White University. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching & Learning*, 3 (1)38-52.
- Mgwebi, T. (2019). The Recruitment, Retention and Progression of South African Black Academics University Policy and Strategy Review. *Higher Education Training*. 3, 1-20.
- Nkoane, M. (2005). "Constructing Knowledge through Learner-centered Approach." Study: presented at *University of Witwaterstand*. Johannesburg South Africa.
- Nkoane, M. (2006). The Africanisation of the University of Africa. *Alternation* 13 (1), 49-69.
- Ochola, O. (2005). The Marginalized Knowledge: An Informetric Analysis Of Indigenous Knowledge Publications (1990-2004). *South African Journal Of Library And Information Science*, 71 (3), 247-258.
- Owusu, F. Y., Kalipeni, E, Kiiru, J.M.M. (2015). Building Research Capacity for African Institutions: Confronting the Research Leadership Gap and Lessons from African Research Leaders. *Community and Regional Planning*. 6, 51-72
- Pulford, J., Crossman, S., El-Hajj, T. & Bates, I. (2020). Strengthening Research Management and Support Services in Sub-Saharan African Universities and Research Institutions. *AAS Open Research*.
- Ramose, M. B. (2004). In Search of an African Philosophy of Education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*. 18 (3), 138-160.
- Ramose, M. B. (2016). "I doubt therefore African philosophy exists". *South African Journal of Philosophy*. 22 (2), 112-127.
- Salau, O., Worlu, R., Osibanjo, A., Adeniji, A., Atolagbe, T. and Salau, J. (2021). Determinants of Retention Strategies and Sustainable Performance of Academic Staff of Government-Owned Universities in Nigeria. *F1000 Research*, 9 (902), 1-14.
- Salau, O. P., Worlu, R., & Osibanjo, A. (2018). The Impact of Work Environments on Retention Outcomes of Academic Staff of State Universities in Southern Nigeria. *Sage Open*. 2, 1-16.
- Tetty, W.J. (2006), Staff Retention in African Universities: Elements of a Sustainable Strategy. Retrieved April 11, 2021 from http://w.w.w.foundation-partnership.org/ulf/resource/tetty_staffretention.

The Chronicle of Higher Education, Washington, D.C., January, March, & June, 2021.

Thomson, N. (2003). Science Education Researchers as Orthographers: Documenting Keiyo (Kenya) Knowledge Learning and Narratives about Snakes. *International Journal of Science Education* 25. 1: 89-115.

Too, E. K., Chepchieng, M.C. & Ochola, J. (2015). Effect of Academic Staff Retention on Quality Education in Private Universities in Kenya. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*. 64, 86-94.

Turner, P & Thompson, E. (2014). College Retention Initiatives Meeting the Needs of Millennial Freshman Students. *College Student Journal*, 48 (1), 94-104.

UK Collaboration on Development Sciences (2021) Research Capacity Strengthening: Learning from Experience.