

GHANA EDUCATION TRUST FUND (GETFUND) FOR INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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ABSTRACT

Financing higher education is a global challenge. In developing countries where governments have numerous economic challenges in the mist of limited resources, educational budgets are largely supported by donor agencies, internally generated funds and payment of academic facility user fees. Since its establishment in 2000, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) has been the major source of funding for tertiary institution in the area of infrastructural development and students loan support. This work examines the role of GETFund in supporting educational infrastructure at the University of Cape Coast. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were employed in the collection of data. A total of 50 respondents were sampled for the study. Analyses of the obtained data show massive improvement of infrastructure in the university. This includes provision of lecture halls, renovation of existing halls of residence and the construction of hostel facilities. Other projects include the supply of equipments to laboratories to facilitate teaching and research and the enhancement of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)

Keywords: GETFund; Infrastructure; Tertiary Education; University of Cape Coast.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the key tools in building the human resource of every nation. Policy-makers and leaders in both formal and informal sectors need to play diverse roles in a coordinated effort to build this important resource. Globally, there is public interest in tertiary education whether it is publicly or privately owned since tertiary education is an engine for national development and an instrument for the realization of collective aspirations [1]. However, there is significant differences across countries with regards to the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) they invest in tertiary education coupled with the limited public resources available in the context of increasing enrolment rates [2]. Most institutions therefore resort to donor agencies and the payment of exorbitant facility user fees to finance tertiary education [3-5].

In developing countries where access to resources is miniscule, donor agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the main sources of aid for educational development [6, 7]. According to Banya and Elu[3], most public universities are highly dependent on central governments for their financial resources with tuition fees often being negligible or non-existent. This challenge greatly affect the quality of higher education in

areas such as science and technology, Information Communication Technology (ICT) as well as research.

The Ghana Education Trust fund (GETFund) was established by an act of parliament by raising the already existing value added tax by 2.5% to support the education of brilliant but needy students in tertiary institutions [8]. Since its inception in the year 2000, the fund has created a student loan trust and a scholarship scheme to improve accessibility at the University and Polytechnic levels of education. The fund has also contributed immensely to infrastructural development in these institutions [9]. Additionally, several faculty members have been sponsored for further studies under the GETFund's Manpower Development Scholarship Scheme [10]. Other achievements of the GETFund include the development of physical infrastructure on campuses, computerization of universities, the finance of ICT centres at universities and supporting historically disadvantage institutions[11]. Considering the importance of the GETFund as a key source of funding for infrastructural development, this work will assess the extent to which the fund has contributed to the improvement of tertiary infrastructure at the University of Cape Coast. It will special emphasis will be placed on provision of lecture halls and office space for lecturers and administrative staff, equipment of science laboratories and internet facilities. It will also assess the refurbishment of halls of residence and hostel facilities at the university.

The University of Cape Coast is one of the rare sea front universities in the world. It was established in October, 1962 as a University College and placed in a special relationship with the University of Ghana, Legon. On October 1, 1971, the College attained the status of a full and independent University, with the authority to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates by an Act of Parliament - The University of Cape Coast Act, 1971 [Act 390] and subsequently the University of Cape Coast Law, 1992 [PNDC Law 278]. The University was established out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education to provide leadership and enlightenment [12]. Its original mandate was therefore to train graduate professional teachers for Ghana's second cycle institutions and the Ministry of Education, in order to meet the manpower needs of the country's accelerated education program at the time. Today, with the expansion of some of its faculties and the diversification of programs, the University has the capacity to meet the manpower needs of other ministries and industries in the country, besides that of the Ministry of Education.

The University started with two departments, namely: Arts and Science. These departments developed into faculties in 1963. In order to achieve the set objectives, in 1964, the University created two more Faculties, namely: Education and Economics & Social Studies [now Faculty of Social Sciences]. The fifth faculty [School of Agriculture] was established in 1975. The Faculty of Science was split into the Schools of Physical and Biological Sciences during the 2002/2003 academic year while the Department of Business Studies was also elevated to the School of Business with effect from the 2003/2004 academic year.

The National Accreditation Board (NAB), at its 63rd Meeting held on October 4, 2007 approved a three- year Interim Accreditation for the running of the Basic Sciences component of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB CHB) programme at the School of Medical

Sciences of the University of Cape Coast. In view of this, the School of Medical Sciences became fully operational when on Thursday, January 17, 2008 the first batch of students was matriculated. The University of Cape Coast has thus metamorphosed into a competitive tertiary institution with an increase in enrolment and programs of study and this work will assess the state of infrastructural development in the context of the GETFund.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study population was made up of staff and students of the University of Cape Coast as well as staff of the GETFund. A sample of 50 respondents was drawn from the study population comprising of 17 staff and 26 students of UCC with the remaining 7 being staff of GETFund. Both purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents.

This sampling technique was chosen for the selection of respondents because the views of only those who can provide the desired responses as per the objectives of the study were sought. The target respondents in this case were considered highly knowledgeable in the issue at hand and an equal chance was given for inclusion of respondents in each category of the sample. The reason for selecting 50 respondents was due to the nature of the data required. Data on infrastructural development does not necessarily require a very large sample size as the representation of the population does not always depend on the sample size chosen for the study [13]. However, sample size may depend on the type of data to be collected as well as the funds available for the study.

Interview guide was mainly used for the collection of data. Both primary and secondary data were used for this work. Primary data was gathered from the field as well as interviews from the respondents. Secondary data was gathered by reviewing existing work related to GETFund and infrastructural development in the form of journal articles, newspaper articles, parliamentary proceedings and some relevant records from the GETFund secretariat. This was done in order to collect factual data and not opinions from the respondents.

All qualitative data were analysed by content analysis whereas the demographic data was analysed with Microsoft excel and presented as tables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The provision of adequate infrastructure is important in any academic environment. Considering the increasing number of enrolment and the need to train qualified personnel to manage all sectors of the economy, institutions of higher learning will require greater amount of funding to support the provision of physical infrastructure and the training of man power for national development. Out of a total of 50 respondents, 58% were males with 42% being females. This percentages show a near-gender balance in the assessment of the subject matter. The responses of the participants interviewed were categorized into themes in order to understand their agreement and conflicting perspectives in relation to infrastructural development. Guided by the “thick description” concept, numerous quotations from the respondents were used to justify their opinions. Besides, greater premium was given to different literatures that intersect in constructing knowledge, a mechanism to ensure content validity. Table 1 shows the categories of

respondents chosen for this work. As indicated, seventeen respondents were staff of the University of Cape Coast with twenty six of them being students. The remaining seven were staff of the GETFund. The representation of these subgroups in the sample allowed for varied opinions on the subject.

Table 1. Categories of Respondents

| Category | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents (%) |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Staff of UCC | 17 | 34 |
| Staff of GetFund | 7 | 14 |
| Students of UCC | 26 | 52 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Field data, 2011

The ages of the respondents range from 18 years to 56 years and above. As shown in table 2, twenty percent (n = 10) of the respondents aged between 18 and 25 years with the majority (n = 24) of them being between twenty six and thirty five years. There was however only one (2%) respondent who was fifty six years and above.

Table 2. Age of Respondents

| Age (years) | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents (%) |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 18-25 | 10 | 20 |
| 26-35 | 24 | 48 |
| 36-45 | 8 | 16 |
| 46-55 | 7 | 14 |
| 56 and above | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Field data, 2011

These respondents had qualifications ranging from Diploma/Higher National Diploma (HND) and below to masters degree and above. As shown in table 3, majority (62%, n = 31) of the respondents had First Degree with eleven (22%) possessing masters degrees and above. The qualifications of the remaining eight (16%) respondents were Diploma/HND and below. It can therefore be said that majority of the respondents had acquired university degree and were therefore better placed to provide information on the subject.

Table 3. Qualification of Respondents

| Qualification | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents (%) |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Diploma/ HND and below | 8 | 16 |
| First Degree | 31 | 62 |
| Master Degree and above | 11 | 22 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Field data, 2011

Responses of the Interview

Increase in enrollment and access in higher education cannot be achieved without concurrent improvement in infrastructural facilities, particularly residential facilities to accommodate students. In order to achieve the objective of expanding access there is the need to improve academic facilities, renovate offices to accommodate faculty and staff, support institutions with office equipments such as computers, photocopiers, and printers to facilitate smooth running of administration. Also, lecture halls need equipment such as projectors, LCD screens, and audio visual devices to accelerate effective teaching and learning. The GETFund allocates a greater percentage of the fund to the development of infrastructure facilities. Act 581:2000 of the GETFund states “the fund will provide financial support to the agencies and institutions under the Ministry of Education through the Ministry for the development and maintenance of essential academic facilities and infrastructure in educational institution” (Parliament Debates Official Report 2000, p.615). In compliance with this requirement the Board of Trustees allocated 521 billion (\$9.83m) (74.4%) and 517 billion cedis(\$9.75m) (40%) of the total amount in 2004 and 2005 respectively for the development of infrastructure in tertiary institutions. In 2005, the board gave 253 billion cedis (\$4.77m) for infrastructure development and the provision of academic facilities at pre-tertiary level and 24.5 billion cedis(\$462,264) for the rehabilitation and construction of classroom buildings, dormitories and administration blocks in the teacher training colleges nationwide [14]. Participants repeatedly indicated the tremendous contributions the GETFund in making in this direction. An official at the GetFund had this to say during the interview:

GETFund is a major landmark policy in tertiary education system in Ghana in recent times. I definitely do not know where tertiary education would be without this fund. It plays such an important role particularly in the physical and academic infrastructure development by improving existing conditions at the universities. Now if you go to all the campuses you will see huge buildings springing up. Of course, buildings alone do not make up universities but these institutions were initially established to accommodate small number of students. But as enrollment increased there has not been corresponding upgrading in the physical infrastructure. The initial capacity of the University of Cape Coast for example was about 2000 students however, the current enrollment is over 20,000 students. So clearly, there is no way the university could house all students. But GETFund is really contributing to institutions infrastructural development” (Respondent, April 2011).

Universities in Ghana over the past three decades have not seen the face of development in their infrastructure. For instance, University of Ghana and KNUST were built prior to independence in the early 1950s as university colleges have survived on a starvation diet in terms of physical development. Institutions have witnessed continuous deterioration of infrastructure. This has become a hitch in the quality of programs they offer. Other problems include outdated library books, complete deterioration of academic buildings, halls of residence and even staff bungalows. In a conversation with the Registrar for academic affairs at the UCC about the contributions of the GETFund towards the development of infrastructure in the UCC, he clearly states:

Massive investment in terms of infrastructural development in all sectors of education in the country is underway. If you visit any of our universities, the University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology, the University Cape Coast, the University of Development Studies and the University College of Education in Winneba, you will appreciate the enormous impact that the GETFund had made. Many of these institutions have witnessed improvement in their academic infrastructure with the building of lecture theaters and 1 hostel facilities being funded in part by SSNIT and GETFund (Respondent, April 2011).

Facilities have remained unexpanded since most of these universities were established decades ago. Initially, the University of Cape Coast, was established to fewer than 5,000 students and is now admitting over 20,000 students to study in different disciplines. Student accommodation continues to face pressure. Rooms in the student halls of residence that were initially designed to accommodate two people are now officially allocated for four people and over. Lecture halls are overstretched. A lecture theater that has a capacity of about two hundred students is now taking over three hundred and above. Overcrowding, sitting and standing outside classrooms during lectures are marked results of complete dilapidation of academic buildings in universities in Ghana. What makes the situation more precarious is while facilities remain unexpanded the limited ones are overstretched and over utilized with less or without any maintenance.

Consequently, universities have drastically cut off enrollment of qualified students limiting access to higher by facilities. Responding to this problem, one participant briefly remarked:

My personal opinion is if the GETFund has not been established, university education in Ghana would have been dead. This is because in the three or four years that GETFund started distributing funds, we have seen a tremendous growth in infrastructure, Communication and information Technology Development. The GETFund had provided money for the rehabilitation of lecture theaters and halls of residence. It has provided money for the purchase of water reservoirs. One big problem of the University of Cape Coast was the yearly water shortages faced by the university community. This problem disrupts academic work since the institution is always closed down for months. GETFund has provided the institution with water tanks that has been very helpful in solving this perennial problem of water shortages (Respondent, April 2011).

More importantly, an official from the GETFund headquarters remarkably outlined some of the progress the GETFund is making towards educational development in general in the country since the creation of the Act 581. He contends that:

Some of the achievements made by the Ghana Education Trust Fund since the past four years include the completion of a thirty-year chemistry lab at the University of Ghana; and structural upgrading of Kumasi, Accra and Ho polytechnics to enable them start degree programs. We have also provided computer laboratories to all the tertiary institutions in the country. We have purchased vehicles to all the second cycle girls' institutions in the country and a good number of secondary schools (Respondent, April 2011).

One of the major frustrating moments for the academic community is a situation where instructors share common offices. There is no privacy at the university in terms of space. Institutions pack administrators in one single roof with no clear distinction of office space with the teaching staff. This in itself creates a lot of disincentive to attract potential instructors. A conversation with an institutional administrator shows how GETFund had contributed to the development of their institution. His estimation of the contributions of the GETfund is summarized below:

Some time ago we felt like neglected in our institutions. Students and visitors come to your office and it looked like a cubicle. A small place, which should have been occupied by a single person, was partitioned for two or three people. There was lack of motivation to work but the GETfund is contributing immensely toward the development of infrastructure and human resources development in our institutions and trying to furnish laboratories for us. This building (an administrative complex) we occupy today was funded by the GETFund. (Respondent, April 2011).

Knowing that the GETFund is contributing a lot toward institutions from the views of administrators, government officials and finance officers is very important, yet comparing and contrasting their opinions with those expressed by other respondents give more objectivities to the analysis. On the same issue, a student leader interviewed reiterated the point already made by previous interviewees. He observed:

If you go to all the universities and polytechnics, you will appreciate the wonderful job that Ghana Education Trust Fund is doing. The GETFund has reformed most of these institutions especially the polytechnics. It has really reformed them and put new faces to them. In fact, some of the polytechnics, which used to look like technical schools are now gaining their reputation as tertiary institutions. Take for example the Kumasi Polytechnics, a new building has been put up for their administration and offices. Now the policy of turning these institutions into degree awarding institution can be a reality because at least they have some of the structures in place that can help them start their programs. It gives some spirit to the faculty who teaches in such an institution and also encourages students to apply to such an institution. I strongly believe that if these developments continue, the pressure on the university can be eased because student would also see the Poly as a good place to get degree. Definitely access to higher education will increase (Respondent, April 2011).

The lack of infrastructure poses serious threats to improving access, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and the general quality of education in universities in Ghana. More importantly, the continuous deterioration of infrastructure has severely affected science education in the university of Cape Coast. Lack of chemicals and equipment have

affected science education in institutions in Ghana. The GETFund supports institutions with the necessary equipment and chemicals, though not enough in most cases, but as one respondent succinctly puts it

Half a loaf is better than none. We were in a situation where nothing was coming, so if today we are getting something we should be proud of that development (Interview, with the university accountant, April 2011).

Referring to the role of GETFund in the provision of equipment to overhaul institutions, a student leader noted:

Most of the institutions have received support from the GETFund for the purchase of office equipments such as computers, photocopiers, printers and internet server for ICTs. Not only universities, most of the second cycle institutions have benefited from the GETFund. In fact, there is an allocation which goes to the members of parliament to support micro educational projects in their constituencies so every year about hundred million cedis is allocated to members of parliament to support education in their constituencies (Respondent, April 2011).

While providing equipments is a problem in universities in Ghana, part of the problem is due to the fragile nature of the economy and currency devaluation. Most of the equipments and chemicals necessary for laboratory experiment and practical work have to be imported from the international market at such an expensive price. Universities find it difficult generating income to import such exorbitant products from the international market. The result of this is training students who are theoretically knowledgeable with less exposure to practical experience. However, this problem is not peculiar to Ghana but other developing countries more particularly Africa nations have suffered this problem than any other parts of the world. A study by the Task Force (2000) amplifies this daunting situation in the Congo. Recounting the infrastructure challenge at universities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the World Bank/ UNESCO (2000) observed that:

The current situation is extremely difficult. Most universities, public and private, lack the necessary funds to provide basic educational infrastructure – sufficiently spacious classrooms, laboratories, equipped teaching hospitals, libraries, computers, and Internet access. In general, students have no textbooks, and professors must dictate their notes or copy them onto a blackboard. The majority of schools have no library, no telephone, and not a single computer that students can use (p.24).

This situation is not different from any other institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa[15]. Once again, financial insecurity remains the major threat to universities. Most universities would like to embark on serious academic research not only within the institutions but outside the walls of university campus. With the ongoing globalization and higher education development, Africa countries fall behind this global phenomenon. In terms of equipments, universities for the past four decades have been relying on outmoded office equipments. This has retarded administrative efficiency, which usually causes a stalemate in the institutions. At the academic level, faculty members and students rely on the traditional modes of searching for library information via index cards. This is because universities cannot afford the cost of establishing a computer lab that would be accessible to all students as we see in the advanced countries.

The dark side of this situation is that not only students pursuing higher education from Ghana deprived of the rich sources of information that are accessible through internationally recognized electronic databases on the internet, but they also rely heavily on outdated textbooks which are of limited relevance to modern intellectual discourse[16]. There was no university in Ghana that has a well-developed computer infrastructure, which can promote scholarly research among students and faculty. Internet facilities are primarily accessible through private internet cafés, which is extremely expensive for student to access for academic purposes. At the administrative, GETFund is gradually furnishing offices with computers. Most of them are connected to the internet to ensure efficiency. (Respondent, April 2011).

Administrative work over the years has been slow not because we are not efficient and incompetent of meeting deadlines. However, we do not have the required equipments to aid our efficiency. I strongly believe that most of the administrators if not all within our offices are computer literate but when they came to this office, there were no computers to work with. They still have to rely on the outmoded manual typewriters. After staying in these offices for more than a year, you will forget all the skills you learned in computing. Sometimes students complain that we are not efficient. This has made our work difficult but since the past three years we have seen major improvements in equipments in our offices. Now we have printers, photocopiers, and computers even though not all of the computers are hooked up to the internet but then it serves the needs of the growing student population (Interview with a Lecturer at UCC, April 2011).

While university students in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan to name a few enjoy long hours of internet accessibility in their institutions, no university in Ghana has such comparable facilities. Students who find themselves in universities in Ghana still use library index card for searching for articles, journal papers and textbook. This process does not progress educational development. When a student gets to the library they spend a greater percentage of their time on locating the position of textbooks. This poses serious threat and challenge to developing an efficient academic system. In reaction to this problem, a government official narrated:

The Ghana Education Trust Fund is now among the richest funds in the country. A time will come that universities will see the face of real improvement. The management is doing a good job by allocating greater part of the proceeds to develop the infrastructure and equipments of the universities. Apart from the buildings you see on our campuses, GETFund is providing billions of cedis for the purchase of office equipments such as computers, printers and photocopiers. They are also providing funds to improve library facilities. For instance, an investment in the encyclopedia project and restocking the libraries is something we need to commend the administrator and board of trustees. These universities do not have modern textbooks but the GETFund is supporting that initiatives. They are financing the textbook supply to most of the primary and senior secondary schools. I think we need to have patience. I strongly believe that in ten years to come our campuses will change, our libraries would be equipped with new books, and our science labs will become a research place for training new scientist for this nation. (Respondent, April 2011).

Majority of the respondents as noted above believed that the Ghana Education Trust Fund has contributing enormously towards the development of infrastructure in the University of Cape Coast. It was acknowledged that the GETFund provides financial resources for infrastructure development and academic equipment. It benefits needy and academically promising students. The science departments of UCC had benefited from the refurbishment of laboratories and the provision of ICT facilities. Particularly, emphasis is placed on rehabilitation, renovation and construction of lecture halls, laboratories, equipments and halls of residence. Investment in infrastructure in the nation's universities remains the biggest accomplishment of the GETFund since its establishment. Construction of residential facilities, rehabilitation of dilapidated academic buildings, investing in hostel accommodation, furnishing offices with equipments to speed up administrative efficiency and effectiveness are marked examples and results of the GETFund's contribution to institutional development. All interviewees recognized the utmost importance of improving the infrastructure base of universities in Ghana. Since this remains the number one priority of the Board, a greater percentage of the yearly amount is pushed into this sector.

However, whereas this area is considered critical to the development of an effective higher education system in the country, implementation of policy objectives must be approached with caution else the importance of this area could be over-emphasized by the Board.

4. CONCLUSION

In the face of increasing enrolment and its accompanying pressure on existing infrastructure (with limited resources), tertiary institutions in developing countries need extra sources of funding to overcome this challenge. The Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) has come as a relieve to solve some of the infrastructural challenges at the University of Cape Coast.

It is clear from the data that the GETFund has played an important role in physical and academic infrastructural development at the University of Cape Coast. This include the construction of lecture halls, office accommodation for lecturers and administrative staff. Science laboratories have also been equipped with chemicals and modern laboratory equipments for teaching and research. Internet facilities have also been expanded and this has positively imparted academic work at the University of Cape Coast. With the refurbishment of existing halls of residence and the construction of hostel facilities, the fund has helped to ease the burden of accommodation on students. Though the provision of water reservoirs, challenges with water supply to the halls of residence have been solved and students can successfully complete the academic calendar without going on break as a result of scarcity of water.

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