

CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA STUDY

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Abstract

University research has historically played a pivotal role in national economic development, prosperity, and growth as well as enhancing the recognition and reputation of higher education institutions and their faculties. In 2006 Ethiopia launched a historical education initiative which expanded their university system from 7 to 24 separate campus locations in response to the set of 8 United Nations Millennium Development Goals formulated in 2000 with targets for 2015 developing nation poverty reductions. This initiative resulted in enormous university administrative challenges including hiring of qualified new instructional faculties and implementing the government mandated faculty research activities. The objective of this study was to identify and describe the barriers to new faculty participation in academic research and to recommend administrative remedies. The stratified random sample included 51 faculties from five of the six colleges at Aksum University which represented 16.3% of the on-campus teaching staff. Statistical non-parametric factor analysis was used to analyze the questionnaire responses. Significant positive faculty attitudes indicated that inactivity in research were not attributable to “a bad attitude.” Barriers to research were found to be qualified training in research design methods, data analysis, and report writing. Deficient incentives for research activity were found to be financial rewards, academic career enhancements, professional presentation opportunities, and research collaboration with peers. This study defined specific recommendations for university administrations’ to mitigate the barriers to new faculty’s research activity. Replication of this study at other developing higher education institutions was recommended. Validation of these research findings at other new developing universities would provide new insights for continuous improvement of faculty research productivity in the current worldwide environment of scarce academic resources.

Keywords: *Research, barriers, attitudes, training, incentives.*