

## **EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Education still remains the engine room for the growth and development of any nation, including Nigeria. Therefore, it became imperative for this paper to look at the challenges and way forward for education in Nigeria. The paper examined the concept of education and the Structures of Nigerian educational system. The paper also identified some of the problems facing education in Nigeria, amongst which are lack of dependable infrastructural facilities, inadequate budgetary allocation, high cost of education, poor planning, none utilization of educational research conducted etcetera. The paper made some proposals that need priority attention which are capable of curbing the problem facing education in Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria as a country is made up of several ethnic group with different orientations in terms of values, beliefs system, attitude, ideas, to mention but a few. In view of the above, there exist unity in diversity and the Nigerian society is often pressurised by her cultural orientation. In order to address this, her educational system must be structured in such a way that it must respond to these changes or become obsolete or irrelevant.

Globally, countries of the world continually sought to improve the quality of her education, particularly the developing countries. Nigeria is not left out, there has been radical shift towards achieving quality education for its citizens. As a country colonized by British administration, formal education or Western education was introduced in Nigeria on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1842 to Badagry by Mr. and Mrs. William De Graft and Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. They all brought missionary education to convert the heathen to the Christian faith. Accordingly, the various missions did not shy away from achieving their primary aim. Every subject of instruction was given religious interpretations. In many cases, the Bible was the primary text used. Moral instruction was also fervently taught in an attempt to make the pupils live exemplary life. (NTI, 2007).

Although, before then, the indigenous educational practice was in existence before the arrival of the missionaries. This type of education centred mostly on environmental sustainability, effective living and productive life and social responsibility. In view of the above, Mezieobi (2015) noted that the unwritten indigenous education motored curriculum was heavily demonstrated as it addressed the need of the then Nigerian and their society. Other missionary schools were also established in other part of the country, as time went on by the British administration.

In the year 1960, Nigeria gain her independence from the British and having realized the enormous role of educational development, the first comprehensive development conference

was organised in 1969 at Lagos under the leadership of Chief S.O. Adebayo and others. Two major findings were unveiled about Nigerian education. According to them:

1. Nigeria education at all levels was still very bookish in orientation.
2. The 6-5-2-3-4 system of education was not responding to the need of the nation.

As a result of the above findings, several other curriculum conferences were also held and the resultant effect gave birth to National policy on Education in 1977 which articulated Federal Government policy on Education. Although, this educational policy document has been revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 respectively. This was a policy that is appropriate for Nigeria education and to have universal application for the entire country. The Nigeria's National policy on Education comprises of ten sections, namely:

- Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria
- Basic Education
- Post Basic Education and Career Development
- Mass and Nomadic Education
- Tertiary Education
- Open and Distance Education
- Special Needs Education
- Educational Support Services
- Planning and Administration of Education
- Funding and Partnerships (NPE, 2004).

The policy aimed at inculcating some national goals.

### **Education as a Concept**

The term education as a concept is quite elusive and not easy to define. The complexity of the discipline is necessitated by the functions education has to perform in society as one of its institutions. For the purpose of this paper, we shall therefore have a look at few definitions of education.

From the etymological point of view, the word 'education' is derived from two Latin words "educere" which means "to lead out" and "educare" which means "to bring up". This means that education brings out skills in someone and builds them up. Okoorosaye-Orubite (2019) defined education as a social creation, designed to meet the specific needs of the society at any particular point in time. Its form, content, methodology and clientele are determined by the society. Nzewu (1985) sees education to play a role of preparing or nurturing individuals to live in society and thus being able to perform specific functions for society. Clark cited in Vikoo (2016) aptly describes education as an interaction between a teacher and a student under the teacher's responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the student's behaviour. O'Connor (1966) also noted that the educational system of any society is a more or less elaborate mechanism designed by society to instil in individuals certain skills or attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in that society. In a related development, Adelowo (2010) conceptualised education as an enterprise which sets out to instil values, attitudes and skills in members of the society. This was aptly supported by Pauley and Buseri (2019), that see education as a socializing agent that equips all its beneficiaries with the necessary tools such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, cultural values, language and social skills to enable them conform to the desires/demand of their society.

To crown it all, the definition of education provided by Nwala is still relevant. For Nwala (1985),

“Education whether formal or informal, is the recognised method whereby a person acquires most of his ideas, beliefs and attitudes: in short

his knowledge, skill and manners necessary, not only to combat the hazards and problem of life ....and to secure the needs of ..... but also to fit into the company of his fellow human being (P.242).

The above definitions shows that education equipped the individual in all ramifications.

### **Structure of Educational System in Nigerian**

The Nigerian educational system comprises of four levels of organization. The first is informal and the remaining three make up the formal system of education. They includes:-

1. **Pre-primary Education:-** This is regarded as early child care and development education, Although informal, this level of education is meant for children of the age range of 2 to 5 years. These schools were established under degree No.16 of 1985 ( National minimum standards and establishment of institutions) It is been run as day care centers and nursery/kindergarten schools by private agencies and individuals. The major objectives is to cultivate and inculcate appropriate schooling attitude and awareness into the young child.
2. **Primary Education:** This is the first level of the formal system of education. It provides a six-year course for children of age range of 6-12 years. This level is regarded as the officially recognized starting point of education, as the key to success or failure of the entire system. The objective includes the preparation for a broad-based education with emphasis on the attainment of permanent and functional literacy, numeracy and effective communicative skills.
3. **Secondary Education:** This is the type of education that children receive after primary school. The secondary school has two stages covering six years duration. The first stage run classes from J.S.S 1 to J.S.S 3. At the end of J.S.S 3, the students are required to sit for and pass the junior secondary school certificate examination (JSSCE). Most of the students are within the age range of 12-15 years. Those that could not cope with formal education are expected to acquire some vocational skills. Infact, Uruakpa (1995) see the junior secondary school as a talent hunting stage in which children are exposed to both academic and prevocational subject with a view to identifying their attitude and talents. The second stage run classes from SS1 to SS3 at the senior secondary level of education. At this level, the student's ability, attitude and interest is considered in subject selection. Although he/she is guided with compulsory, field of study, technology, humanities and business studied. Evaluation and certification is based on the continuous assessment and external examination like WASC and NECO. The students has the age range of 15-18 years.
4. **Tertiary Education:** Here, a post secondary education is given to successful students into either university, college of Education, polytechnics and other related institutions. According to Gbamanja (1997) objectives of higher education includes the development of intellectual capacity to understand and appropriate the environment, and the acquisition of appropriate.
  - a. **University Education:** The university is the highest level of tertiary education in Nigeria. Two sets of university exist-namely, the federal and state. Admission is open to all student that passes Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination, with a minimum of five (5) credit passes in O-level examination. The student's age range is between 18-22 years. The university award first degree, Masters degree and Ph.D degree in various disciplines as well as diploma in education and other professional courses.
  - b. **College of Education:** the colleges of education form part of teacher training institutions which are attached or afflicted to universities. They offer three years programme for the award of Nigerian certificate in Education. Some of them are degree awarding institutions.

- c. Polytechnics Education: The polytechnics provides middle level manpower and vocational skills in different areas of specialization. Polytechnics courses are in two phases, each of two years duration leading to the award of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND), respectively for another two years. We also have inter university centres, monotechnic , specialized institutions such as school of Health Technology, Colleges of Agriculture, National Teachers Institutions (NTI) etc.

The above discussion sees education at all levels to be of great important to the entire nation. Therefore, its objectives should be followed strickly.

### **Problems of Education in Nigeria**

The problems facing education in Nigeria is inexhaustible and the search for it is unlimited. Sometimes, old problems continue to be new problems as long as they remain unresolved. In fact, some of these problems continue to be chorus in our education song. Some of them include:

1. Inadequate budgetary allocation/ under funding: Nigeria is one of the country that is yet to allocate 26 percent of her budgetary allocation to education as recommended by the United Nations (UNESCO). This goes a long way to affect education in the country. One of the major problems facing Nigeria education is under funding.
2. High cost of education: The cost of education in Nigeria is going on an alarming rate. Income of some parents could not enable their ward attain quality education or attend standard schools. Some that manage to finish from primary or secondary school could not further or acquire tertiary education.
3. Poor teachers welfare: Nigerian teachers are not motivated to produce their maximum productivity. They are not only poorly paid but can not measure up with their counterpart in other areas. Perhaps, they are waiting for their reward in heaven as the society may say. Sometimes, the teacher do not receive their regular promotions in addition to the poor salary they receive.
4. Poor students' interest to teacher education: Most students are not willing to study education courses. Their orientation, interest and values toward teaching career are not encouraging. Sometimes they come to education faculties through frustration from other faculties. Then, what does the society expect from such teachers that can not offer what they do not have?
5. Flexibility of Nigerian system of education and curriculum: Education system and her curriculum continue to change from time to time and hardly cane someone notice positive change. Abdulgafar and Edinyang (2013:p.66) aptly made this point clear when they opined that "the purpose of change is to improve the standard of living for the good of (the) common man".
6. Politicization of education: Most attempts at educational reforms fail to succeed partly due to disparate political ideologies by leaders. Lack of continuity also exist from one administration to the other. In the area of accreditations, some schools that did not meet up the standard are allowed to operate too.
7. Poorly equip libraries and laboratories: In most Nigerian schools, libraries and laboratories are not only ill-equipped but are grossing absent. In some schools, the Parent-Teachers Association (P.T.A.) and other voluntary bodies are directly involved in provision and equipment of public school libraries and laboratories.
8. Poor management of education: Management of education in Nigeria at all levels may continue to suffer from ineffectiveness until policy prescriptions are passed as Act of the national assembly through the provision of legal backings. Sometimes, there exist educational conflict between the roles of federal, state and local government on the management of public schools.

9. Value place on paper qualification: Many Nigerians have misplaced value on qualifications of candidates in the society. By so doing, some of the student resort to getting the certificate through various means and at all cost. Those that cannot burn their midnight candles may either take to examination malpractice or certificate forgery.
10. Poor Parental Guidance: The parents are directly responsible for the provision of educational need of their wards. So also to proper guidance of the students' at home but student that lack parental support for education will definitely be day-dreaming in the classroom or schools.
11. Population explosion on the part of the students: An increase in population over time and the continuous demand or pressure on education has led to over-crowded classrooms in some schools. Instead of the approved ratio of teacher to student (1:40) at secondary school level, a teacher may be teaching 100 students or above in a classroom.
12. Lack of dependable infrastructural facilities and amenities: Quite a good number of Nigerian schools in Nigeria lack facilities or equipments. This range from students' learning in dilapidated building hostel, recreational centres, workshop etc to lack of instructional materials for teaching and learning.
13. Poor attitude of both teachers and students to the teaching and learning process. Teaching and learning ought to be a complementary process but sometimes, due to moral laxity the teacher may not be able to teach inspiringly to motivate the students to learn. Such are capable of crippling the education sectors.
14. Irregular payment of teachers' salary: Often times, teachers in some states do not receive salary on time or as at when due. They are not regularly promoted on regular bases. This could affect the morale of teachers.
15. Teachers are not well supervised and monitored in some states: Where regular inspectors by inspectorate is lacking, some teachers may branch off into quick money-generating activities such as farming, butchering, petty-trading, etc. even during school hours (Nbina, 2007).
16. Poor Planning: A dearth of statistic on students' enrolment, number of teachers, their qualifications and demographic trends, statistics on buildings and other learning facilities are all inadequate at present. All these are capable of stalling planning.
17. Non-Utilization of Educational Research Finding: Result of educational research finding such as student work, conference papers and publications in learned journal are not sponsored and not and sometimes not utilized in Nigeria.

### Way Forward

The following is hereby recommended to address the problems confronting education in Nigeria:

1. Government should allocate more fund if possible, 26 percent of her total budget as recommended by UNESCO to education sector be effectively implemented.
2. Government and proprietors of school should reduce the cost of education so that parents can easily afford to educate their wards
3. Teacher should be well motivated in terms of salary and other allowances so as to enable them discharged their duties effectively.
4. Students should develop more interest while the school authority should introduce innovative and interesting programmes in education.
5. Policy and curriculum planners should plan for meaningful and purposeful change over time based on circumstances.
6. Government and politicians should not politicized education in the country.



7. Nigerian schools should be equipped with good libraries and laboratories that can stand the test of time.
8. There should be effective management of education at all levels. This could be achieved by the cooperation of the government and proprietors of private schools.
9. There should be provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities and instructional materials for effective teaching and learning process.
10. There should be regular grant to the state by the federal government for payment of teachers' salaries.
11. Teachers should be adequately supervised in their various schools.
12. Educational research finding should be implemented and sponsored.
13. Teachers should be sponsored for workshop, seminars and refresher courses so as to update their knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

Based on issues discussed in these paper, it became clear that Nigeria's future prosperity depends on producing children who are well prepared to take their place in tomorrow's society (FRN, 2004a). The production of such calibre of children, however depends on the availability of qualitative education. In order to make such global euphoria in the near future a reality therefore, the first move should be to educate the masses through appropriate and relevant curriculum, bearing in mind that education itself, may not do the magic over night but the entire society has roles to play.

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