EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The on-going reforms in Nigeria is sequel to the challenge of National Development which is an off shoot of the Millennium development goal for Africa Nations. Among eight goals, education is directly linked to achieving most of the set goals. Because, it is seen as the tools and instrument of social, economic and political mobilization, man power increase generation, skill, attitude and value needed for nation-building. It is on this background the paper sought to define education in the light of national development, it stresses that if government is sincere with the reforms in the education sector, it will guide to solve the twine burden of poverty and illiteracy in the country. Further advantage of the reform when properly implemented will result in better service delivery to the civil society.

Introduction
This paper will attempt an investigation on the education sector since 1999 in other to assess the level of educational reforms as its significantly affect national development. Education no doubt is a veritable means for national development. It is this believe Itedjere (1997), argued that a nation do not develop beyond its educational status. This is based on the idea that the skill and instrument for national building is imparted through education to individuals in a given society. It is on this note education is seen to be both a process and a product.

UNESCO (1982), says education has brought forth men capable of vivid imagination of the need of their societies, qualified to organized production factors, administer, and govern in accordance with rules of a modern state. According to Akintola (1981), education is a basic force for the socio-economic and political transformation of society. In this regard, education has been described as something more than schooling. These two definitions see education as a product, that is as an instrument to improve the society which brings a return in the future. It is the application of the knowledge education provides that is necessary for national development.
Statement of Problem

Every national government that understood the role of education to national development must of necessity pay attention to its educational policies and programmes. It is in this direction, educational reforms are conceived in order to re-position education to meet the need of national development. Thus, the concept of educational reforms is an aspect of government deliberate initiatives to think of the best way to improve on the education sector.

Nigeria for instance inherited a number of education policies and programmes especially from her colonial master. Beginning from 1970, when schools were removed from the hands of the missionaries, various educational systems have been introduced. However, this paper will be concerned with the reforms experienced and experimented since 1999, that is at the wake of the 21st century. Similarly, it will examine how this reforms has encouraged national development.

Conceptual Framework

National development is synonymous with nation-building. It is the deliberate efforts of a nation’s leadership to create opportunity for economic growth and development. According to the Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia (2006), nation building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a nation using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people or peoples within the state so that it remains socio economically and politically stable and viable in the long run. In other for full participation of citizenry to state reconstruction education is used to mobilize and orientate individual and group toward achieving the aim of nationhood.

Origin of Nigeria Educational Reforms

The statutory Nigerian education system started with the Ordinance for the promotion and assistance of education in the Gold Coast, which applied to Lagos. According to Taiwo (1992), the ordinance achieved little success in Lagos for the lack of Lagos input and for the excessive imitation of the English Elementary Education Act of 1870. When Lagos attained its colony in 1886 attention was given to the criticisms that tray the first ordinance. Therefore on 30th May, 1887, there was enacted an ordinance to education. The existing ordinances were co-ordinated and amended into the 1908 ordinance which covered the colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, The Lugard Education Ordnance of 1916 and the amending Ordinance of 1919 covered the whole country, Nigeria. It is this background Nigeria educational reforms historically originated from. Thus, all other forms of reform has their origin and implication on socio-economic and political development in its nation.

Similarly, Itedjere (1997), posited that Western-type education in Nigeria dates back to 1842 with the second coming of the Missionaries. He noted, that by 1977 when the National Policy on Education was first introduced which was later revised in 2004, education I Nigeria was a huge government venture. It was the
wish of the Federal Government of Nigerian that any existing contradictions, ambiguity, and lack of uniformity in educational practices in the different parts of the Federation should be removed to ensure as even and orderly development on the country. The birth of the National Policy on Education of 1981 brought about what is known as the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This was a major reform in the history of Nigeria education development. This policy was a clear deviation from the colonial educational policy hitherto being practiced in Nigeria.

The objective of the 2004 policy was to prepare student in practicals as well as academic was for a useful, productive, and self-fulfilling life style of their choice. In addition, the policy encourages the introduction of vocations hence it is sometimes called career education. Again, it is noteworthy that the policy was predicted on Nigerian philosophy of Education and the National objectives. The five national objectives are building of:

1. A free and democratic society;
2. A just and egalitarian society;
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. A great and dynamic economy;
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

The Need for Educational Reforms in the Present Dispensation in Nigeria

Educational reforms in the present is sequel to meeting the millennium goal. At the dawn of the century, many national government projected what should become of their nations in terms of development and better services to their people. The fundamental principle of the millennium goal was for an improved society by the end of the millennium. A prime force and tool to be utilized in the attempt to achieving the millennium goal among others was education. It was this that has called for a shift in National Policy on Education in many countries including Nigeria. Thus, new policies on education are formulated in direction of socio economic and political development of a nation., one of such objectives was to restructure school curriculum basing it on entrepreneurship education. Thinking in this direction was to pursue education for national development. Because former system of education has done little or nothing to equip graduates to face the challenges of unemployment in the Nigeria society.

He need to equip individual with skill, value and attitude of self reliance was the motivation behind the mind of those who are calling for a curriculum that places emphasis on entrepreneurship education. National development is a combined effort of government, private sector and the individual. Thus, the empowerment of civil society is essential to any programme that will foster development. Many experts believed that education is development. It creates choices and opportunities for people, reduces the twin burdens of poverty and diseases, and gives a stronger voice in society. For nations it creates a dynamic workforce and well-formed citizens able
to compete and cooperate globally—opening doors to economic and social prosperity.

**Socio-Economic and Political Situation**

Abdulla (2007), identified one of the needs for education reform to include changing economic, social and political situations in both developed and developing countries. He noted, that these have combined to create needs for constant innovations and reforms in education. Imogie (1988), has long ago argued that educational transformations are always the result and the symptoms of social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for people to feel at any particular moment in time that need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate.

The above argument correspond with the experience of Nigeria in the late 1950 to mid 1970’s after independence when new found wealth based on natural resources have contributed to a redefinition of social priorities and objectives. Thus, within this content, expanded and improved educational provision became a focus of development efforts, especially in developing countries including Nigeria as a means of acquiring new skills and increasing productivity. It is on this note, education more utilitarian.

**The Case Studies of Education Reform in Nigeria**

The National Policy of Education (FRN, 2004), perhaps is the main reform/innovation in Nigeria post-independent educational development. It was commonly referred to as the 6-3-3-4 education system which replaced the previous 6-5-2-3 system. During the seminar of the Nigerian Educational Research Council, (NERC) Akintola (1980), stated that the new senior secondary school proposed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education is an innovation, indeed a transformation of the present system which is a five year course followed by a 2 year High School Certificate course, neither of which is employment oriented. Both aspects appear to prepare for the higher institutions in a number of discipline providing university graduates with no supporting intermediate personnel, therefore limiting their productivity. Further, the range of disciplines the student could pursue in the university is equally restricted and particularly deficient… Disciplines. To redress the situation both at the high institutions and the secondary school, the 3-3 structured has been proposed to channel junior secondary school pupils into the senior secondary school as well as into teacher-training and crafts.

This new system was intended to reflect the fact educational structures in the country will be made up of six years in primary schools, three years of junior secondary schools and six years of senior secondary for Nigeria children. The curriculum for the secondary schools, especially the junior section, is more technical and vocational oriented, while the senior secondary school curricula is
more technical and vocationally oriented, while the senior secondary school curricula is more academic. Students who passed the junior secondary schools will then be admitted to the senior secondary schools.

Some of the common arguments given in a favour of the new system was that it would enable students to focus attention on more practical aspects of education rather than purely academic pursuits which seemed possible only to high ability children. As usual, attempt to first of all identity, then attempt to solve the problems inherent in the old system were not made. This eventual brought about the failure of the intended reform as contain in the 1981 National Policy on Education.

This illustrates the irony of educational change process in Nigeria. Educational advancement is seen as the only way in which social development will occur in the Nigerian society. Yet this need does not seem to leave room for careful and comprehensive systems and cost analysis and a consideration of constraints innovatory programmes are likely to impose on the available resource or their consequences for the future.

The Privatization of Education

The latest reform on education in Nigeria is to privatize education. Report in the Guardian, (Thursday, April 5, 2007) revealed that in 20003, ASUU cried out that the reforms would ultimately take education out of the reach of the poor. They pointed to the fact that the privatization of education is taking its toll on the poor. They pointed to the fact that the privatization of education is taking its toll on the poor. Public schools-junior and secondary are dying while expensive private schools are thriving. Poor parents do not have public junior secondary schools to send their children to. Government has progressively been privatizing education to shelve its responsibility for educating its citizens.

Table below shows the declining fortune of funding of education since 1999: Expenditure on Education as % total expenditure (Guardian, 2007).

Based on the curve above, the trend is clear that the Nigerian government according to the Guardian analysis do not mean well for education innovation. ASSU argued that the World Bank/IMF reforms are not about funding education to develop the sector as the Nigeria government would want the public to believe. That the government is not truly interested in modernizing. They made this observation based on the fact when they stated we have been told that reforms are already on the education sector. Colleges of Education, Polytechnics have been
abolished, Unity Schools are to be taken over in management (as in first step) by private bodies. Funding sources are being merged all without any enabling law. After illegal implementation has begun, stakeholders are invited to discuss the Education Reform Bill.

The implication is that educational reforms in Nigeria is experiencing a vicious circle. What is called reform are not improvement on existing structure that are aimed at turn around the education sector for the benefit of the common masses.

**The Imperative of Nigerian Education Reforms**

Aniebonam (2007), stressed the imperatives of Nigeria education reforms when he opined that the reforms are aimed at the vision of an emerging economic model, delivering sound educational policy and management for public good. With this vision comes the expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development. This implies that education will be used as a tool of empowerment for the poor and the socially marginalized groups; as an effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of the human resources; and as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies.

The above explained the vision statement of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education under Obiageli Ezekwesili. This was recently introduced to the nation a structured blue print for education reform and intervention, documented in the Ministry's white paper titled *Vision 2020: The role of the Nigerian Education Sector*. Globally, education reform is not a new thing, and has been in practice even among developing nations around the globe for many years. Reform serve as a toll for administrators to sit back and take a hard look at the system with a clear understanding of what was broken, following by a vision of achievable outcome, strategy and implementation plan.

For instance, education reforms in Chile, in South America during the 1990s had the objectives of improving quality and reducing class inequities. Within the overall reforms, several interventions over time had a significant impact on quality including school evaluation and rewards system, elimination of double shifts to increase the number of hours and activities in the school day, and improvements on teachers’ salaries and job conditions.

The education reforms in Nigeria, Ochayi (2006), quoting Obiageli Ezekwesili, that education in Nigeria will deal directly with early childhood and special needs education which has been enshrined in the policy on integrated early childhood development. With the policy, the Federal Government becomes formally involved in the provision of education at the early childhood level and government through the Ministry had made policies that focus on early child care. Formal centers for early childhood education in the past were non existent especially in the area of special needs education which deals with special skills for educating children with specific challenges. As a
way of ensuring immediate take-off of the programme, schools have been asked to designate one classroom each for early child care development (ECCD).

Reinventing education is another imperative of Nigerian Education reforms. At a presidential forum on education, it was revealed that the on-going reforms in the education sector as it pertains to tertiary level of education is directed at both reversing the standards and institutionalized best practices for excellence. As 2007 begins, the decisions reached at the several education for a, conferences, seminar, workshops and meetings in 2006 can be manifested.

One significant development was the education-for-all agenda, captured in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme. It provides that, at the end of nine years of continuous education, every child should acquire appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable in order to contribute his/her quota to national development.

The implication of the above is built on the objective of attaining national development by focusing on the education of the Nigerian society. It is in this direction a shift is made from the 6-3-3-4 system although its integrity retained now to be known as 9-3-4 that is 6 years of primary education along with 3 years of junior secondary education, making an uninterrupted 9 years of schooling. The new system provides a disarticulation of junior secondary school from senior secondary schools. Those who can move to senior secondary school from senior secondary schools. Those who can move to senior secondary school will spend 3 years, after which the last 4 years are for tertiary education. Emphasis will be on curriculum diversification which is still being fine tuned by the relevant authority to cover effectively and adequately, individual and community needs, including the rudiments of computer literacy.

As the year was drawing to an end Ezekwesili embarked on some of the most profound reforms ever in the education are to become proximate and contagious campuses of universities. Also, the convergence of the convergence of the 21 parastatals in the Ministry of Education into six groups, reactivation and strengthening of the federal inspectorate/inspection of all secondary schools in the country, tracking down of product of the education system at all levels to ascertain their status and what they are doing presently, introduction of tertiary innovative enterprise, initiatives for talented skills to blossom, retraining of teachers, housing for all teachers among others.

Another important reform development was the directive by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) that only teachers who pass information Communion Technology (ICT) test will be registered henceforth. ICT is made compulsory from primary school and is contained in the curriculum being prepared by Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). The scheme is to make every classroom to have ICT, computer
connected into the Internet electronic classroom.

Furthermore, major components of the education reform agenda included. Re-ordering the education sector towards attaining the country’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for all; Matching quality instruction with relevant curriculum; Harmonization and co-ordination between Federal, State and Local Government in many areas, especially funding. Addressing child/pupil student hunger, nutrition and health problems through Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme. Identifying children with special needs-blind, deaf, dumb, physically handicapped etc. upgrading all Grade II Teachers to NCE level eliminating gender disparity through enhanced Girls Education Project. Strengthening entrepreneurship studies in tertiary institutions for graduates to be self-employed and job creators rather than job seekers.

**Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that government should improve on the following areas:

1. Increase budget allocation for the educational system at all level
2. Implementation of school curriculum should be given adequate funding
3. Government should employ more teachers and enhance their welfare.

**Conclusion**

Education reform as assessed in this study and as compared with global reform on education has a singular aim. And that is to improve on society, for government to be able to provide better services to the civil society. This objective definitely cumulate in national development because as seen in this study provide the tools, skill, value and the workforce for socio-economic development among others in Nation building.

Therefore, the reforms embarked upon by Nigeria since 1999, on the education sector articulated in a number of policy packaged in various forms of programmes, requires sincere implementation on the part of government in other for the generality of Nigeria to benefit from the on-going educational reforms and with the objectives of achieving national development.

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