

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN POST PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Uju E. Nnubia

This paper attempts to x-ray the contemporary issues in the post primary education in Nigeria. It also looked at what education really is and its aims/objectives. The paper tried to highlight the issues and problems in the secondary education system in this contemporary time. Finally, it offers solution on how to alleviate the problems in order to save the educational system of this country from collapsing in the new millennium.

Introduction

Education system is one system that is in constant need of change, evaluation and re-evaluation in order to ensure that its practices and products match and mediate the ever changing social, economic, technological and political needs of the society. If the aims and objective of a nation's education are not regularly and systematically assayed and reviewed, the products will miss the train and the trend and the system will be proffering yesterday's solution instead of looking at tomorrow's problem today-it will be near useless.

The issues and problems normally associated with education in any particular country are inextricable with the expectation of the society from education. Generally, the worth of education depends on whether or not the anticipated objectives/aims are achieved, the depth of the content that is required by the scholar and the level of performance or capabilities manifested by those who have passed through the educational system. Therefore, a nation without vision and mission for education is a nation walking on the path to stagnation, which may lead to lack of peace, stability and development as the vision and mission for education is the key that opens the door to all other human activities.

The purpose of education relative to the needs and characteristics of the Nigeria society particularly with regards to multivariate value systems form the background upon which issues about contemporary education in Nigeria may be critically appraised. Problems arise any moment there is a missing dimension between the expected and the observed with particular reference to the implementation of planned educational programmes and the utility value of the product.

Incidentally, society's expectations from education tend to be as dynamic as humanity itself. Thus, a type of education that once attracted high qualitative premium may become worthless with changes in socio-political relations as well as change in techno-scientific revolutions. For example, American education with emphasis on social development lost its charm as a result of challenges Americans got from the Soviet Union in 1957, by its first satellite launch in the orbit. In response to the challenge, Americans embarked upon the pursuit of excellence through emphasis on the study of sciences and mathematics and the application of heuristic methods of problem solving.

In Nigeria, the formal western education was initiated by Christian missionaries. The content then was essentially based on the 3Rs-Reading Writing, Arithmetic. The worth was for all practical purpose, lied to the Christian faith. However, with the dawn of patriotic and nationalistic tendencies and the ultimate attainment of independence in 1960, education naturally became a vehicle for emancipation and hope-emancipation from ignorance and superstition, and hope for political awareness, skill acquisition, manpower development and social engineering. Indeed, by the time National Policy on Education emerged, education has become identified as "an instrument par excellence for national development" (NPE, 2004).

Several efforts have been made both by government at all levels and by other stake holders, international agencies, parents and even students towards ensuring that education plays the role of championing the course of national development, self emancipation and progress. Indications however are that appreciable successes have not been recorded thus suggesting that there are problems, missing-links and new challenges in the efforts and structures already put in place towards attaining the national objectives using education as sign post.

There are three tier of education: the primary, post primary and tertiary levels; each playing a particular role in the course. The post primary level is the level at which candidates (students) are expected to have matured into developing interests in particular field of endeavour and thereby start acquiring skills and attitude towards excelling in them. This stage is therefore of utmost important in the education industry.

In consideration of the place of the post-primary education in Nigeria, this paper looks at contemporary issues that face this level of education in the overall problems that face education in

What is Education?

E

ducation is the instruct

ion, direction and exposure of what is in man already. It involves the development of a man, intellectually, morally and so on. This in turn brings about a change in him. Education therefore, is the development of the whole man. It points to the experiences which one is exposed to. In other words, one is exposed to some experiences and as a result of these experiences, changes take place in the individual and these changes are what philosophers refer to as education.

According to Urebu (1991), education is the total process of human learning by which knowledge is impacted, faculties trained and skills developed; hence man by nature is endowed with knowledge. A school of thought holds education to be a term widely used. When people talk about education, they almost invariably talk about the learning in schools which is culminated in the acquisition of certificates. They equate education to mere reading and writing.

Education in its wider definition means the instruction, teaching, direction and exposure given to human being in order to acquire knowledge or to widen the knowledge already acquired. Education therefore, is not the same as schooling. Schooling is only but one of the avenues through which education is provided. Other agencies of education include: the home, mass media, peer group and church and so on.

Education may also be thought of as important social institution, the totality of structures and roles, processes, relations and material instruments built up around society's interest in the enculturation or socialization of its citizenry.

Summarily, there are forms of education. They are: formal education, informal education and non-informal education.

Formal Education

This is the type of education given under the direction of the school and runs from primary to the university and including all other academic studies.

Informal Education

This involves the processes through which an individual acquire attitude, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences and educative influence and resources in his/her environment i.e. from family and neighbours, from work and play, from market places, mass media, etc.

Non- Formal Education

This is any organized education activities outside the established formal educational system-whether operating separately or as an important feature of some identifiable group of people and learning objectives. Non-formal education as used in the new national policy on education simply implies a given educational programmes though organized is not part of the formal system. Its participants may be of any age. It is meant to afford educational and especially schooling opportunity to those who desired but lost the opportunity at their earlier ages.

The Aims and Objectives of Education

In simple terms, having an aim is having some purpose or goals in mind. When one talks of aims of education, one means the purpose or goals which certain people believe to be educationally desirable or valuable. Thus, one talks of education for democracy, for citizenship, for intellectual discipline, for emotional maturity and so on. In stating these aims, one is looking towards some formulation of result of schooling or for some guiding purposes to provide cohesiveness to the pattern of school. Thus, one's aims become one's end-in-view. According to National Policy on Education (2004) the national educational goals, which are derived from the philosophy include:

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- c. The training of mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

In very broad terms, education is helping the individual to learn how to make choices more responsibly, but the choice must be thought of as taking place within a social setting and with due regard for the consequences. The ultimate aim of education therefore, is growth into greater knowledge of and control over the environment.

Why issues and Problems

Even if it is only five percent of the adults in Nigeria share the same view that what individuals need is functional education to forge ahead, then there are bound to be issues and attendant problems because of differences in ethno-social perceptions, political orientations, cultural values, level of aspiration and traditional priorities of the divergent nationalities that compose the Nigerian society. Therefore, on a national level, one finds education as social service experiencing interminable dynamism in policy emphasis, in modus operandi and in the quality of its products. Perhaps on the eminent transformations consequent upon this dynamism, compounded by the hypocritical standards of those entrusted with the implementation of projected policies hinge the issues and problems of contemporary education in Nigeria.

Appraisal of the nation's educational system will x-ray catalogue of regrettable developments, disappointments and frustrations in so many ways. The cause of these deviations from expectations constitutes the issues and the problems. Therefore, close look at the issues associated with contemporary education in Nigeria will enable lovers of education, policy makers, teachers and indeed, the entire Nigerians to appreciate the problems confronting the educational system and therefore sensitize all on how best to salvage education from threatening shadow of death.

Secondary Education in Nigeria

Background Information: Before 1968, that is pre-war in Nigeria, six types of proprietors provided secondary education leading to differences in standards depending on their financial and management capabilities. Those proprietors of secondary education include:

- a. Christian Missionary Schools which dominated the south and parts of the north and few Moslem Grammar Schools;
- b. Community Grammar Schools;
- c. Private Secondary Schools by genuine philanthropist;
- d. Federal Government Colleges serving as oases of unity;
- e. Regional Government Colleges; and
- f. A large number of private secondary-commercial 'enterprises'¹ particularly in the township.

Due to the observed contradictions and the lack of uniformity in educational practices at this level, the Ashbi Report of 1968 and the National Seminar on Education Policy held in 1969 and 1973 (Lassa, 1996), recommended for uniform secondary education system. Government now went ahead to take over the management of all the schools that were viable and forced unviable ones to close or fold up. After a period of two decades, it became obvious that government has bitten more than it can chew. Not only that the standards set were not met, but also the financial strains of maintaining the schools facilities as well as paying salaries became extremely burdensome. Based on this, all the six type of proprietors re-surfaced in the provision of secondary education with their age-old differences rather exaggerated by the economic depression and melt-down of contemporary Nigeria.

Several Issues and Problems that can be Associated with Secondary Education in Contemporary Nigeria

The Need for Secondary Education and our Value System: The national aims of secondary education could be summed up into two major goals:

- a. Education for self realization, and
- b. Education to prepare for high education.

The emphasis given to materialism in recent times has adversely affected the worth of secondary education in the eyes of many Nigerian. The males particularly prefer going into apprenticeship in trading they feel that yield money quick to 'wasting' years pursuing education that no longer guarantees employment to its beneficiary. Thus, in some states of the country, secondary education is abandoned for girls. According to Nnenna (1990) investigation, there is inverse relation in the proportion of male to female growth rate in secondary enrolment in Anambra state between 1976 and 1986. While the male enrolment decline from 62.2% in 1978/77 to 37.23% in 1986, the female proportion increased from 337.76% in 1976/77 to 62.77% in 1986. Among the reasons held responsible for this development is the factor of unemployment after graduation. Other contributory factors are parent's inability to sponsor their wards and the desire on the part of get rich quick syndrome. In contradiction to this situation, Adamu (1987) provides empirical evidences that suggest almost total exclusion of female from secondary education in Sokoto state. For instance, by 1983/84, less than 04% of over 20,000 students in junior secondary schools in Sokoto state were girls. The social organization for Islamic religion which is monopolized by men is held responsible for this unfortunate development. Kaita (1972) also suggests traditional prejudice against western education as the cause and more particularly against women education.

Similar drops in the transition rate from primary to secondary schools have been reported in other states of the country and if the trend continues, Nigerian objectives of secondary education particularly as defined under the 6-3-3-4 system may never be realized.

The Problem of Funding Secondary Education

With the take over of schools by the government, there was clear decline or withdrawal of support from the communities and voluntary agencies. Consequently, one now finds school fees being unrealistically pegged in certain states. At the same time, the federal government had since withdrawn subsidies on secondary education. It is ironical, according to Ukaeje (1991) that while primary education is free, at least theoretically, and university education is tuition free, secondary education is fee paying. One obvious implication is that the dictates of the national policy on secondary education are no longer treated as binding by the states. Several problems have therefore arisen which include:

- a. Many secondary schools lack adequate physical and infrastructural facilities.
- b. Science laboratories and technology workshops that were available, are not operational due to lack of functional equipment and necessary materials
- c. Lack of adequate class rooms and furniture e t c.

The problems of poor funding of secondary school education are not exclusive to any state, it cut across the whole states of federation. It is a national issue because there are states in which students either perch on the window or squat on the floor to listen to lessons. Games facilities are completely neglected except where PTA offers some. School clubs and societies can no longer operate due to lack of fund. Staff development through in-service training programmes is stalled because funds are not available for sponsorship (Zuru, 1994). All of these pathetic developments rested on inadequate provision of funds for the secondary tier of our educational system.

The Problem of Teaching Materials

Time was when the dedication of teachers was manifested through the use of teaching aids prepared by the teachers themselves. The school authority will provide cardboard papers and colouring kit, the teachers will prepare relevant charts and maps. In recent times schools are so impoverished that students have to be charged for chalk, typing sheets, examination materials and for any materials needed for practical lessons in the science and vocational subjects. To worsen the situation, government subvention for providing school equipment are often cornered and embezzled. One wonders how the students who learn all their lessons by abstract imagination can perform wonders in their final examinations.

The Issue of Staffing

There are several issues that relate to the staffing of secondary schools in Nigeria. Some of such issues include:

- a. At the quantity levels, one notices obvious inadequate relative to students' enrolment. For instance according to Soruke and Dike (1994), there are an alarming 25,000 vacancies estimated to exist in the secondary school system in Rivers state.
- b. Educational administrators are now bugged with the problem of maintaining the real and imaginary staff list submitted by unscrupulous and fraudulent school-heads, hence the concept of ghost teachers and a version of '419' which has notoriously permeated the entire Nigerian society.
- c. At the qualitative dimension, Ohuche (1991), identifies two problems associated with the training of the senior secondary school teachers to be:
 - i. Lack of professionally trained teachers in teaching methodology
 - ii. The handling of the practicum of teaching while the student-teacher undergoes his/her training in the university.

All these boil down to mean that teaching practice is handled in a haphazard manner. And yet it is regarded as the only peculiar aspect of the teacher-training programme that leads to professionalization.

d. The choice of school head is a different set of problem in the aspect of staffing. Appointment of principals and vice-principals are based on seniority in the year of graduation from the university. Little or no regard is given to the quality of leadership and other capabilities accrue in the individual involved. It is only by chance that good school administrator can be employed by such method. According to Ejiogu (1985), teachers generally prefer 'consideration' leadership style either because it permits them 'greater autonomy, less surveillance and collegial relationship with the administrative head' or as resentment against hard-work which bureaucratic formalities advocate.

Problems Connected with Student

There are so many problems associated with our secondary students, which include:

a. School Dropouts: This refers to a situation of student inability to measure up to the standards expected of him/her. Out of frustration, the student withdraws his/her studentship. This could be attributed to the mode of entrance and academic background of the student into the secondary schools. It could further be traced to the issue of quota policy governing admission. This quota system sometimes denies better pupils' admission because the quota allocated to their state or local council area of origin had been saturated. One implication of admitting substandard candidates on the basis of political balancing (especially at the unity schools) is that, sooner or later, the pupil will not find his/her feet as a result of incessant failure in the class test and in other academic exercises. Such pupils become frustrated and ultimately have to drop.

b. Indiscipline: Secondary school age is age of adolescence, which is usually problematic to parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the cause of training human beings. In the school, these adolescent boys and girls indulge themselves in so many atrocities, which include, drinking, smoking and use of other hard drugs. Sexual acts are no longer at the experimental level since students freely indulge in sexual intercourse, hence the need for the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum. Other indiscipline acts include; stealing, truancy, touts, rudeness, manifestation of delinquency etc. Even, some schools have become an arena for barbaric acts.

c. Examination Malpractice: The dimension of malpractice is myriad and the scope of involvement is incredible and frightening being inclusive of not just students in the examination hall, teachers, clerks typists, parents, guardians, louts, officials of examination bodies and security operatives employed to protect examination. The height of it in recent times, is the issue of 'out side WAEC or special centre' by senior secondary school students.

d. Poor Reading Culture: Certain misbehavior of secondary school students are traceable to the 'indiscipline' and inability of school authority, government, parents to provide sufficient reading materials as well as compulsive reading culture in the young ones.

Conclusion

Education is not a static phenomenon, it is seen according to Awojobi (1979), 'as the queen of socio-economic development' and along with mass communication as the two formidable weapons for combating the operative forces of ignorance. But the challenges of educating the young ones depends on what the people understand education to be doing for them at specific period in the history. Thus, the process of educating is fraught with inevitable demands, challenges which continue changing and expanding with population growth and desires of the society.

But problems will always arise any time the demands are misconceived, or the challenges underrated and faulty strategies employed in addressing the issue. So, having appraised educational issues in our secondary schools in contemporary times, what is needed therefore is just multitude of readiness, willingness and concession from all Nigeria, young and old to forge ahead our educational system in the new millennium.

Recommendations

The aim of discussing contemporary issues in our educational system and isolating specific problems is to enable educational planners evolve rational approaches towards improving the quality of education in the new millennium.

Accordingly, the following suggestions are considered relevant for immediate attention:

i. Laying of Solid Foundation: It has been observed and established that teacher education is the foundation of quality in educational system. It is therefore reasonable to argue that viable thrust at raising the standard of education from whatever level it has fallen, whether real or imagined, should start with improving the quality and standards of teacher education. This is true because, most issues raised about the standard will improve when there are better-qualified teachers, both in subject content and pedagogy, to flood the primary schools at which solid foundation to be laid.

ii. **Need for Improved Inspectorate System:** With the shortfall in the number of experienced school inspectors consequent upon rapid increase in the number of secondary schools, it has become increasingly difficult to get reliable appraisal what happens in the secondary schools. This problem is not only in secondary school level of education, but in other tier of education in Nigeria. However, there is need to provide a virile inspectorate outfit for our school system, to police the maintenance of the minimum standard and to act as incidental resources to advise teacher on problematic encounters with the pupils.

iii. **Constant need for Continuing Teacher' Development:** An effective teacher is one that constantly regards him/herself as a scholar. Innovations in subject content as well as new dimension in methodological approaches do not wait for any teacher. School proprietors should therefore, make provision for encouraging the participation of teachers in one or other forms of in-service education. The teachers should be sponsored to workshops and seminars to improve on their knowledge and skills as well.

iv. **Control on the Exploits of Private Schools:** Running of private schools has become a very lucrative business in Nigeria. Many educationist and non-educationists have been attracted into the business. The lucre of the business is nothing other than the exorbitant fees students are paying to enroll in the school. Many of these schools do not have good facilities adequate classroom, play grounds and games facilities. They just rely on vertical expansion of blocks to provide classrooms. Without prejudice to the good service being rendered by some of the schools, it still sounds reasonable that government should intervene to save education from bastardization by less philanthropic school proprietors and to save the society from undue exploitation. Ministries of education should step up regular inspection of private schools to ensure the maintenance of standard in the provision of facilities, teaching staff and to inject some sanity into the fees demanded.

v. **Banning of 'Special Centers or out Side WAEC':** Government should ban this issue of senior secondary students sitting for West Africa Examination Council out side their schools. This should be done immediately to bring sanity into the educational system of this country. The out side WAEC involves the students travelling miles across states of federation to hire mercenaries that will sit for the examination for them. This has resulted to many students parading WAEC certificate they can not defend. It has also led to students not paying attention to their studies because they believe that they must clear their WAEC at a sitting. Government, parents and all stakeholders in education should put hands on desk to see that out side WAEC is a thing of the past.

vi. **Incentives for Head-teachers and Teachers:** Rewards have general motivating influence on normal human beings to put up their best. It is strongly suggested that 'teachers of the year' should be rewarded as an incentives for other teacher to improve their productivity. Similarly, the best managed schools could be indentified from local council through state to federal levels and the principals of such schools duly rewarded.

vii. **War against Child Abuse:** Many parents and guardians deny their children and ward the right to .education because of their material interests. A case has been made against children being withdrawn from school to join their guardian's business or go into apprenticeship. Such inordinate ambition may lead to notorious cases of armed robbery, fraud and gangsterism.

In the Northern states particularly among the Moslems, parents do not easily enroll their male children in school, instead they prefer them going begging for alms in the streets. The girls are not left out; they are either used as hawkers of foods and snacks or given out in marriage at tender ages. The proposed decree for protecting children's right will be a welcome development in Nigeria and will contribute immensely towards the effort of government in mass literacy campaign.

References

- Adamu A.R (1987) Women formal education in Sokoto State. A preliminary empirical analysis and some policy recommendation: *The Farfaru journal of multi- disciplinary studies, COE Sokoto, vol, 1(3) pp 1-13*
- Awojabi, A(1979), *Nigeria today* Lagos, John West Publication Ltd.
- Ejiogu M.A (1985) Patterns of principal's leadership style preferred by teachers in secondary schools in Lagos, *Nigeria Journal of teachers' education* vol.3 (1) pp 77-88
- Kaita M.H (1972) Women education in Nigeria, in Aderalagbe A (Ed): *A philosophy of Nigeria Education,*

Heineman educational book, Nigeria.

Lassa, P.N. (1996) *Teacher education in the 21st century planning* research and statistic Dept, NCCE Kaduna.

Nnenna, M.N. (1990) An investigation into the growing decline in male enrolment into educational institution in Anambra state. *Nigerian research in education* COE, Eha- Amufu, vol. 2(5) pp63-73

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) *National policy on education* Lagos: Federal government Press.

Ohuche R.O,(1991). Senior secondary education in Ohuche R.O (ed): *Moving education in Nigeria towards the Year 2000*. Enugu, the Nigeria Academy of education and Optical Computer Solution Ltd.

Sorunke, L. & Dike, W. (1994). 25,000 vacancies in rivers for teachers. *National concord Newspapers* vol.14(2984), Mon, Jan 18 front page.

Ukaeje, B.O. (1991) Financing education in Nigeria: Future prospects in Ohuche R.O (ed) *Moving education in Nigeria towards the Year 2000*. Enugu, The Nigerian academy of education and Optical computer solution Ltd pp 39-59.

Zuru, A (1994), WAEC Blacklist Kebbi Schools: *National concord newspaper* vol.14 (2988), Friday January 21, front page.